007

#69

JIM LAWRENCE
A RAP WITH THE WRITER OF GREEN HORNET, JAMES BOND THE HARDY BOYS & MORE!

007 ARTIST
MIKE GRELL
FROM GREEN ARROW TO ROBIN HOOD

FROM PARIS
ANTHEA SHACKLETON
DARGAUD'S GLOBAL SALES GURU GABS

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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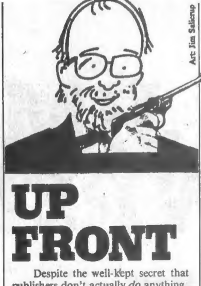

Art: Jim Salicrup

UP FRONT

Despite the well-kept secret that publishers don't actually *do* anything, while of course maintaining a facade of harried overcommitment to fend off any prospect of actual effort, every so often the sheer stress and strain of doing nothing simply proves too much.

A vacation becomes essential to refresh and renew one's viewpoint.

Having just returned from such a retreat with a fervent commitment to continue to do even more of nothing than ever before, I have been giving the whole matter of life in general considerable thought of late.

While flipping through old issues of ORION, a metaphysical magazine I edited in an earlier incarnation B.C. (before comics, that is), one of my editorials seemed *appropos:*

Everything moves in cycles. That's important to keep in mind. There have been periods — at least in my life — that seemed to last forever, during which I was depressed, inactive or, somehow, unsatisfied. And there have been others when my activities and output were extremely high, and life seemed quite rewarding. Yet sometimes it's possible to get so immersed in the game that total identification with our roles may result in what, to an objective or contemplative eye, is sheer madness. Such as people committing suicide because all their possessions have been destroyed in a fire, etc.

A sense of humor often helps keep us from becoming utterly preoccupied with our roles in life — from letting our possessions or our professions become obsessions.

'Nuff said?

— DAK

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"I learned early on that you can't just take Ian Fleming's books

JIM LAWRENCE

DAN HAGEN: *How long have you been writing?*

JIM LAWRENCE: Oh, goodness, about 40 years, Dan. Actually, if you want the whole survey before the comics time, I started out writing technical training films and went from there to magazine articles . . .

DAN: *Freelancing for magazines such as . . .?*

JIM: I guess my top sale was to READER'S DIGEST. That was a reprint from something that had appeared in BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS. But there were also some trade journals as well.

DAN: *Were you doing fiction, non-fiction, both?*

JIM: Actually, the first thing I ever sold was a short-short story to the CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, which I believe is long out of business, if I'm not mistaken. But that was right at the outset. I didn't write fiction until the '50s really. But that depends on what you include under the heading of "fiction." I started writing for radio — shows like SGT. PRESTON and THE GREEN HORNET.

DAN: *Oh, really? You did THE GREEN HORNET?*

JIM: Yeah.

DAN: *That's wild. I've got some of those old shows on tape.*

JIM: I don't have any on tape. I have scripts somewhere down in the basement, moldering away. In fact, I came across a SKY KING script just recently which turned up in an oddball place.

DAN: *For the radio show?*

JIM: Yeah. I wrote for about half a dozen shows in my time. So that was one period of my life. Then, beginning in '54, the radio shows went off the air and gave

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and translate them into strip form — you've got to have T and A."

way to television. So then I began writing juvenile series books.

DAN: *Dave Kraft said you did THE HARDY BOYS.*

JIM: TOM SWIFT, THE HARDY BOYS, and a series of my own called CHRISTOPHER COOL: TEEN AGENT. And eventually others as well — THE BOBBSEY TWINS and NANCY DREW. I did a fair number of those.

Actually, I started in Detroit, and that's the way I got into radio, because, you know, some of those old shows originated in Detroit. Then **Allen Saunders** lived down in Toledo, which is not too far from Detroit, I and went down there to sit at the feet of the master, so to speak. I did some work for him, and then in '59 he recommended me to write JOE PALOOKA. So I was doing books and comics more-or-less at the same time. I wrote PALOOKA for three years, then in '65 I started to write JAMES BOND.

DAN: *They had dropped the strip for a couple of years, and then they revived it in '65.*

JIM: I just happened to hit 'em at a good time when they were putting together a new team. I wrote for them, I guess, a little better than 20 years. Toward the end, there were a couple of breaks. They'd stop it and start it up again. Then in 1970, I sold a strip called FRIDAY FOSTER, which you, perhaps, have never heard of . . .

DAN: *I've seen references to it.*

JIM: It was for the Chicago Trib-New York News Syndicate, and in its heyday it ran in the NEW YORK DAILY NEWS. It was done with a Spanish artist, a really marvelous artist — I think one of the greatest. A fellow name of **Jorge Longaron**, lives in Barcelona. He's still a top-drawer illustrator. I don't think he was on a regular strip after FRIDAY FOSTER, which terminated in '74.

DAN: *Some of the Bond stuff you adapted, and then I know you did a lot of original stories, too, for the Bond strip. In doing the adaptations, economy must be the key. Looking over some of the Bond strips yesterday, I thought, "This is really taking the story and stripping it down and trying to find what those essential elements are, because you have so few words in which to do it. How do you go about taking a novel and turning it into a comic strip?*

JIM: Well, first of all, you should be aware that here in the States, story length has been a very, very limiting factor. When I came in, the average story length

"The first thing I ever sold was a short-short story to

James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY JOHN McLUSKY
THE LANCIA ROARED DOWN INTO THE VALLEY, WHILE TRACY THOUGHT OVER BOND'S STORY, AND THEN...
TELL ME THE TRUTH, JAMES. HOW MANY MEN DID YOU KILL?
THREE FOR CERTAIN, ONE I'M NOT SURE ABOUT. LET'S SAY THREE AND A HALF
HOW MANY ARE STILL AFTER YOU?
WELL, THERE WERE ABOUT FIFTEEN UP ON THAT MOUNTAIN, SO THAT LEAVES ELEVEN AND A HALF—PLUS THE BIG GANGSTER
12p
James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY JOHN McLUSKY
JAMES BOND GRIMLY REVIEWED THE SITUATION
THIS IS A WELL OF A TIME TO RUN OUT OF PETROL—WITH A CAR FULL OF ARMED THUGS COMING UP AFTER US!
GRAND ROUTE
THERE'S A BRIDGE OVER THE RAVINE AND AN S-BEND COMING UP HERE. WATCH YOUR SPEED, TRACY!
AND IN THE PURSUING CAR...
LOWER THE WINDOW— THEY WILL BE WITHIN RANGE FOR A FEW MOMENTS WHEN THEY DOUBLE BACK ON THE FIRST TURN!
17p

Episodes 176 and 178 of the original James Bond newspaper strip

was about 12 weeks, and you could get away, sometimes, with maybe 16 weeks. But then it got down to maybe 10 or eight. Nowadays, I think most editors would like to stick to a six-week story.

The English — Jesus, they're so much more fun to work for than the Americans. The editors are nicer, they're more intelligent, they know what they're doing and they have greater respect for creative work than American editors do. We weren't bound by any such restrictions. In fact, the average story ran, I think, about 35 weeks. So that was a great relief.

Of course, I also learned early on that you can't just take **Ian Fleming's** books and translate them into strip form. What you say is absolutely true. You've got to have action going, you've got to have T and A, you can't have long sequences of talking heads. Things have to be happening all the time, and you have to have colorful villains. And the colorful villain often has to be involved with some kind of superscientific weapon. So those were the rules.

DAN: *And in the adaptation, you're sort of pulling out of the novel the one sentence that characterizes a character?*

JIM: At the beginning, I would sometimes lift a sentence from **Fleming** for that very reason. I can remember one in the first story I did, THE GOLDEN GUN, where Bond has been a prisoner in Russia and he comes back and he's been brainwashed into killing M. They put him through a series of tests, and one of the tests is the soft man and the hard man. And somewhere in there I think I lifted a sentence from **Fleming**.

But unhappily, **Fleming** wasn't writing for the comics medium. He was writing books. So you did have to condense, and in some cases you had to take liberties.

Being a writer myself, it outraged me to see a writer's work fucked around with by a nitwit editor. When I have been asked to manhandle another writer's work, it turns me off completely. Believe me, Dan, in doing Bond, I strove my mightiest to be faithful at all times to **Fleming**, because I greatly respected **Fleming**. But, of course, sometimes you can't.

Two Bond albums have just been put on the market within the last year. These were published by a British company. I'm proud of these. I saw these — stuff I'd done years ago — and thought, "God damn, that's pretty good." I think the artist, **Yaro Horak** — well, he has a colorful background of his own which I won't even try to go into. He and his family were refugees from Manchuria. Even before then, in the First World War, his father was in the Czech army. I don't know if you know anything about the history of the Russian Revolution, but there was a period when Czech prisoners got control of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and a bunch of them escaped. Yaro's father escaped to Manchuria, along with a Russian gal whom he married . . .

JIM: A wonderful guy, marvelous fellow. They migrated to Australia, and then Yaro went to England. He cranked out a lot of comic books in Sidney, then went to England to do the same, and was hired to do Bond. In our early years of doing Bond — I think that's when Yaro was probably best-paid — gee, I look at his backgrounds and they're just beautifully done.

DAN: *I saw that the Bond strips that you did ran in Yugoslavia, of all places.*

JIM: I don't know that, but it doesn't surprise me. Especially in the '60s, when Bond was at its height, they were printed all over the world.

DAN: *Wonderful to see Bond in a communist language.*

JIM: I missed that aspect of it, because nowadays we're not so conscious of it,

the CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, which is long out of business."

especially in Yugoslavia.

DAN: *Were there any restrictions on you in sex or violence in the strip?*

JIM: Generally not. In those days — well, I think even now — newspaper syndication is the most Victorian medium in the business. I can remember when **Al Capp** had to apologize when he had a story that was set in Lower Slobbovia, and he had girls wearing fur bikinis. Back in '59, '60, in JOE PALOOKA, girls had to wear full coverage bathing suits. Bikinis were out.

But as far as nudity or semi-nudity, we were totally free. I think it was generally more adult. We could not, however, say "bloody." We couldn't say "bitch." "Bloody," of course, the British have always considered a stronger expletive than we do.

DAN: *Were there any restrictions on you in the stories you could do?*

JIM: All stories had to be submitted to the **Ian Fleming** estate.

DAN: *So it was the Fleming estate rather than the movie company that exercised supervision?*

JIM: That's right. That situation may have changed slightly, I don't know, because there was a complication that grew out of one story . . .

DAN: *THUNDERBALL.*

JIM: That's right. But in general, all of the stuff we did was vetted by the agent of the **Fleming** estate. No problem at all, except once in the very later days.

I had a story that I thought was a very good story. It opened in Pakistan. I've forgotten the details, but there was a British agent who had been in Afghanistan and got out into Pakistan. There was a concerted attempt to kill Bond, and much of the story took place in a cemetery — I know that's a strange place. It was a fairly short story, and it seems to me there was parade. There was a Soviet delegation in London, and perhaps this had to do with the grave of **Karl Marx**, I don't know. But there was a bit that had to do with a bomb and, actually, I thought it was quite good.

But that was the one story that I ever got a serious kickback on. In fact, they turned it down. The EXPRESS editor in London said that the agent wanted to know, "Is this the same guy who's been writing for us?"

DAN: *What didn't they like about it, did they say?*

JIM: I guess they thought it was too

Episodes 351, 354 and 573

James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY HORAK
BOND PRISES OPEN THE SEALED COFFIN . . .
I TRUST THE HONOURABLE DEPARTED WILL FORGIVE THIS ACT OF VANDALISM—
IF MY HUNCH IS RIGHT, YOU'D BE TREATED EVEN MORE DISRESPECTFULLY WHEN YOU GOT TO HONG-KONG!
WHAT TH—?!
351
James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY HORAK
JAMES! THANK HEAVENS YOU'RE BACK!
DID YOU FIND ANYTHING?
ENOUGH TO PUT A ROPE AROUND SMYTHE'S NECK. I SHOULD THINK —AND PROBABLY HIS PARTNERS'!
I'LL DROP YOU AT THE HOTEL, TRUDI— THEN I HAVE ONE MORE JOB TO ATTEND TO TONIGHT!
354
James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY HORAK
MOMENT IS RIGHT — THAT MAY BE ALL WE HAVE! THINGS COULD BLOW UP AROUND HERE ANY MINUTE!
WHAT IS THIS — THE MOMENT OF TRUTH?
I'VE A HUNCH YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT ROBOT SUB — YOU YOU TOLD ME YOU HATED KRIST — WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?
I MAY BE OUT OF MY MIND, JAMES, BUT IF IT COMES TO A CHOICE — I GUESS I'M ON YOURS!
I MUST BE OUT OF MY MIND TOO, MYRA— BECAUSE I'M GOING TO TRUST YOU!
573

"I did one LONE RANGER, and did some GREEN HORNETS."

serious and grim. Most of the stories had semi-nudity and colorful villains and so on, and this was rather more realistic, but nevertheless I thought it was a pretty good story.

DAN: *What about the movies? Were they just out in left field from you?*

JIM: We had no connection with movies. I think there have been a couple of cases, maybe, where ideas that we have used in doing our original stories have also been used in movies, but I don't for a moment imply that they were lifted from us, because there are certain limited possibilities with types of weapons and so on. People are bound to have the same ideas.

DAN: *You said you liked Fleming's work. Did you like the character, Bond?*

JIM: Yes, I liked him very much. When you live that long with a character — day after day, you're turning out stories about him over a 20-year period — you get so steeped in the books, the character. I suppose my notion of Bond was shaped by the way Yaro drew him.

The man who was then strip editor of the DAILY EXPRESS was very definite about the fact that the strip visualization of Bond had existed before **Sean Connery** played in the movies. There was a similarity. Subsequently, Yaro's drawing of Bond undoubtedly drifted away from that somewhat. But basically, there was a similarity. I think Yaro maybe, over a period of time, tended to make Bond's nose more Roman, a bit.

But with Yaro, like **Longaron** — the man's such a superb artist, a marvelous draftsman. When I worked with **Longaron** on FRIDAY FOSTER, of course I took care in writing my picture directions, but it always seemed as if **Longaron** could read my mind. What I visualized, that was the way it would come out. He was a wonderful guy to work with. You work with some artists, you know, and it gets to be a real pain in the ass.

Barry Nelson was the first James Bond in "Casino Royale" (CLIMAX MYSTERY THEATER, CBS TV: 1954).

All artists think they ought to be writing the stories. Understandably, perhaps, they tend to regard writers as interlopers who are riding on their backs. But there was none of that with **Longaron**. Of course, **Longaron** was a Catalan, which is a little different than a Spaniard, so he could hardly rewrite my stuff. But he never wanted to. He was just a delight to work with. And Yaro was the same way. Yaro and I never argued about anything. I was happy with what he did, and he seemed to be pretty happy with what I did.

DAN: *And you say his drawing sort of influenced your characterization of Bond, in a way?*

JIM: I imagine they must have, over the years. Toward the end, there was a period when two other artists were brought in to do Bond. They turned me off totally. I just didn't feel at home, I didn't think they knew what they were doing. They didn't understand what the character was all about, what the strip version of Bond was. But probably that was just human nature — was so used to working with Yaro. Working with somebody else, it was no longer fun. It was just a chore. I think it was a chore to them, too. Whereas Yaro and I, over the years, took a certain proprietary feeling about Bond, I guess.

Sean Connery's first appearance as James Bond in DR. NO (1962).

"You work with some artists, and it gets to be a real pain in the ass."

DAN: *Were you happy to take over the strip?*

JIM: At the time I took it over, which was in '65, Bond had just come in. I had become aware of Bond before. He had gotten publicity because **John F. Kennedy** was a fan . . .

DAN: *Right. FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE was one of his top ten books.*

JIM: I'd read him. **Fleming's** talents as a writer, I imagine, are not as evident today as they were then. He didn't create the secret agent medium, because it had existed long before, but he certainly picked up the ball and ran with it. He wrote vivid action stuff. In THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, which was laid in America, some of his gangster dialogue was embarrassingly corny. So he had places where he failed, but nevertheless . . .

DAN: *But he made the attempt. Many others wouldn't even attempt to do dialect, which is a tricky business . . .*

JIM: It certainly is. That, of course, was something I was very aware of. There are a lot of English words that are different from American usage, and I was very nervous about that. Common examples are the trunk of a car, the boot of a car. You quickly learn some. For instance, we use "quiet" as a verb, "quiet down" . . .

DAN: *And they say "quieten."*

JIM: Right. But I learned that. Where I goofed, they would change it. I guess my favorite authors have always been English writers. I don't know why. I was very conscious of the fact that it's so common for English writers to try to write American dialogue and fall flat on their faces, funnily so.

DAN: *So you knew what you were getting into when you started with the strip.*

JIM: Yes, and I suppose in some ways there were things I disapproved of in Bond, as to the character of Bond. Don't ask me to pinpoint exactly what I mean by that, but things I didn't approve of I suppose I soft-pedaled, and did it my way insofar as it was in keeping with the character.

But by and large, the character of Bond as created by **Sean Connery** — and it's not just that he did the best Bond movies, but he did, I think, contribute something to the popular notion of Bond as a character. He brought something to it that certainly **Roger Moore** didn't have, or anybody else.

DAN: *I agree. Although Timothy Dalton is doing okay, he's sort of playing it laid-back. He's chosen not to compete with Sean Connery, which is a good idea.*

JIM: I greatly like this present Bond as an actor, but . . .

Newspaper ad for FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE (1963).

DAN: *He lacks something in stage presence, it seems to me.*

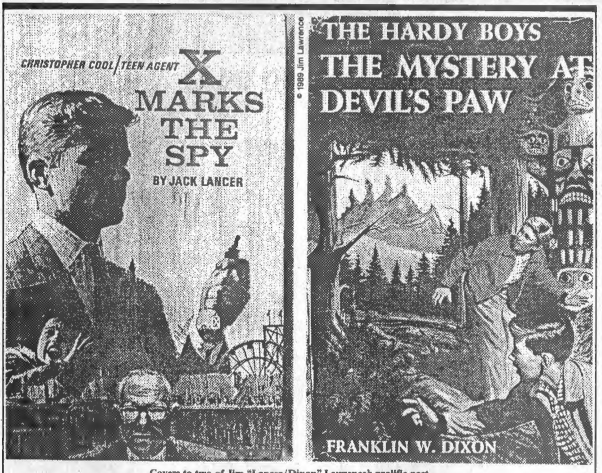
JIM: Well, he's primarily a stage actor, whereas **Connery** came from the Glasgow slums. I think he did a hitch in the Navy, and he was a weightlifter. So he's a fairly bras..sy fellow. He looked the part.

DAN: *He looks like the guy you wouldn't want to meet in an alley. I always thought that if Roger Moore had battled Goldfinger, Bond would be dead.*

JIM: It has become more apparent, I think, in **Connery's** latter-day movie roles, that he's a good man. He's essentially a nice guy, I think.

DAN: *And finally his acting ability is being recognized by Academy Awards*

"FRIDAY FOSTER was about a black model who worked for a



Covers to two of Jim "Lancer/Dixon" Lawrence's prolific past . . .

and so forth. For many years, I think many people just dismissed him because he was too successful, and in this comic-strip role.

JIM: That's right. But in the beginning, I'm told that he and **Michael Caine**, who also came from the lower class, disdained to be phony gentlemen. **Caine** still speaks Cockney, and **Connery** still has his Glasgow accent. And, of course, that really doesn't fit in with the books, because **Fleming's** Bond is very much an Englishman. So I'm sure that **Connery** influenced our thinking about Bond, and everybody else's.

DAN: *What was FRIDAY FOSTER about?*

JIM: It was one of two black story strips. There was a black gag strip — WEE PALS, I think, was the title, which is perhaps still running. And then FRIDAY FOSTER was about a black model who worked for a white photographer. I sold it in '69, actually, and it began appearing in January of '70. That was at the height of when they first began what they called "Blacksploitation."

DAN: *SUPERFLY and movies like that?*

JIM: Right. So FRIDAY had a pretty good run. Top-drawer newspapers all over the country. Given other circumstances, it could perhaps still be running today, but it was a combination of things.

In the fall of '74, that was a period of recession, for one thing. There was a pulling in of horns, and with that blacks became less of a saleable commodity. In addition, there was a rather complicated situation at the syndicate. There was some rather deadly in-fighting there. There was a change of management. The woman who became strip editor at the syndicate at that time, well, I'd say she really didn't know her ass from a hot rock about the strip.

The strip wasn't making as much money, so **Longaron** pulled out because we couldn't afford him. She had the notion of getting a black artist, which is a good thing in itself. The only thing is, at that time at any rate, there were damn few black artists who were capable. They weren't in the same league with **Longaron**. She wanted to hire a kid from Harlem. Actually, he was a very nice kid, but he was not a professional artist. His drawing looked like kindergarten stuff. He knew nothing about layout or anything like that. So I just refused to go along with it. I said if that was going to happen to it, I'd rather have it killed.

A movie was already in the works at that time. They had sold the movie rights and the movie was eventually produced in '75. I got a piece of it, with a little arm-twisting and the help of a lawyer.

DAN: *Your contract didn't have any subsidiary rights clause originally?*

JIM: No, in those days — things have happily changed a great deal — but in those days, unless you were **Al Capp**, you surrendered the copyright. It was owned by the syndicate.

DAN: *As Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster did.*

JIM: It was the general rule. Plus the fact that I was pretty naive in those days. When you get a chance to sell your first strip, you're not looking in the horse's mouth. You're all excited. It's

white photographer — it was at the height of 'Blacksploitation.'"

tremendous.

In fictional terms, I started out writing for radio. Actually, I did some broadcast writing after that — I sold some scripts to the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., and I sold a TV script to them, too. For a brief period in '68, I worked on the TV soap ANOTHER WORLD.

DAN: *That must have been an interesting experience.*

JIM: It was just a fill-in chance. It never went anywhere. Going back to my books business, I started writing these series books on a freelance basis. All of those series were then produced by a company located in East Orange, New Jersey, called the Stratemeyer Syndicate — which was not a syndicate in the newspaper sense of the word at all, it was just a name. They were what is now called a packager. They created and produced the books, and most of their books were published by Grosset & Dunlap and some by Doubleday.

After I'd freelanced for them for about five or six years, they offered me a full-time job on staff as a writer-editor. I turned it down a couple of times, but finally in '62 we came east from Detroit and located in New Jersey, and I worked for them for five years. And, then for various reasons, I got a little claustrophobic.

I was a bit pissed-off, too, because I'd created this series called CHRISTOPHER COOL, TEEN AGENT, and at the time I was hired I understood that if I created a series, I'd get a piece of it. But having created a series, I didn't get a piece of it.

Anyway, I wound up walking out of there, and strips became more important to me. For a time, they were my main bread and butter. Then I subsequently began doing books again. Around '71 or '72, I guess, I began doing paperback novels for another packager. Packagers were beginning to be a recognizable entity on the publishing scene.

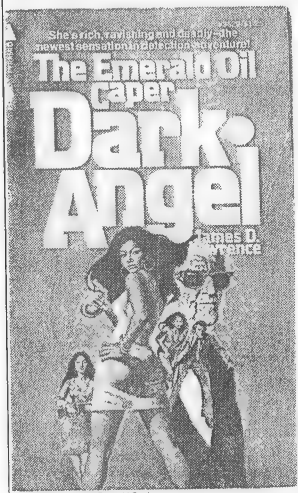
DAN: *Like the EXECUTIONER series, things like that?*

JIM: The ones I did were for a guy named **Lyle Kenyon Engel.** Many hack writers like myself cut their eyeteeth working for him. I had a series under my own name — a black private eye called THE DARK ANGEL. I was doing FRIDAY FOSTER then, and she was in my mind. Then there was also a kind of screwball sci-fi series under a pseudonym, **Hunter Adams,** called THE MAN FROM PLANET X.

From that point on, I was doing books and comic strips kind of catch-as-catch-can, living a very harried life, constantly battling deadlines and so on, because I was always doing about four or five things at once.

At the same time I began doing FRIDAY FOSTER — that was in January 1970 — I also began writing CAPTAIN EASY. I had done freelance

. . . and two more.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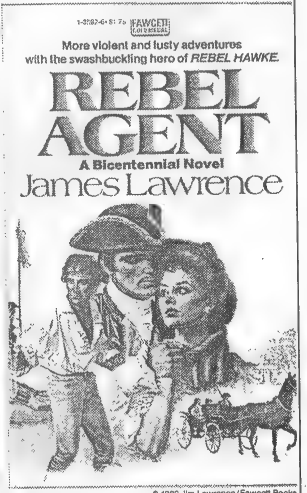
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"Fleming's talents as a writer are not as evident today as then."

WELL? I AM WAITING TO HEAR YOUR REASON FOR RUNNING AWAY!
I AM TOO OLD TO BE AT SCHOOL --YET MY BEASTLY GUARDIAN KEEPS IGNORING ALL MY LETTERS!
HIS LAWYER SIMPLY WRITES BACK THAT I MUST STAY IN SCHOOL!
SO YOU ARE GOING TO BEARD YOUR GUARDIAN IN LONDON?
CERTAINLY NOT!
I SUSPECT THE BRUTE WILL NOT SEE ME OR REPLY BECAUSE HE WISHES TO KEEP MY FORTUNE FOR HIMSELF!
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YOU'RE AN HEIRESS?
IF MY CLOTHES LEAVE YOU IN DOUBT-- THEY WERE CHOSEN BY MY AGED COUSIN ADELAIDE -- ON ORDERS OF MY GUARDIAN'S LAWYER!
AND WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO IN LONDON?
BECOME A LADY-BIRD!
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LYDY-BIRD? BLIMEY, WHERE WOULD A PROPER YOUNG LYDY EVER GET SUCH A NAUGHTY IDEA?!
WE CANNOT BELIEVE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SAYING!
MY FRIEND CLAIRE'S BROTHER RUPERT HAS TOLD US ALL ABOUT LONDON LADY-BIRDS--AND THE GAY LIVES THEY LEAD!
--RIDING IN THE PARK AND DANCING EVERY NIGHT WITH THEIR BEAUX!
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HMPH! YOU HAVE NO WISH TO GET MARRIED?
HEAVENS NO! WHY TIE MYSELF TO ONE MAN -- OR LET SOME TITLED NITWIT GET HIS HANDS ON MY FORTUNE?!
AND WHAT OF YOUR LATE FATHER?
PAPA LED AN ADVENTUROUS LIFE! NO DOUBT HE HOPED TO PROTECT ME BY PICKING SUCH A STRAITLACED OLD GUARDIAN!
© 1980 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

Newspaper strip by Jim and artist Gray Morrow (BARBARA CARTLAND'S ROMANCES).

scripts for **Les Turner.** He retired, and his art assistant, **Bill Crooks,** continued doing the art and I began writing. So I was doing FRIDAY FOSTER, CAPTAIN EASY and JAMES BOND all at once, plus doing some books in between. Somewhere along the line, I think it must have been about '78, I did another strip for the LONDON DAILY EXPRESS, called SOLITAIRE. It was about a shop girl who suddenly becomes rich, she inherits a fortune. It is of no great importance, except that **Barbara Cartland** read it in London, and it was, I think, perhaps a factor in my subsequently creating a **Barbara Cartland** strip.

For a while there, I got to be quite a creator and seller of comic strips. When Buck Rogers was being revived, there was a guy at the company which was reviving it, Leisure Concepts. I had gotten to know this particular guy earlier, in the '60s, when there was an attempt to make a strip out of THE MAN FROM UNCLE, which came to nothing. He agreed for me to get an artist and put together some samples. I got **Gray Morrow.** That strip was sold to the NEW YORK TIMES.

While I was doing that, women's romances had become very strong in the late '70s. It occurred to me that romances could be a subject for strips. The first effort there was that I approached Harlequin about doing a strip. They were tentative, but they were willing to give it a shot. I got **Leonard Starr** to do the art. Strangely enough, I ran across the art for that just recently while sorting out some stuff. I have a great admiration for **Leonard Starr.** He's totally professional. Everything he does, he does well. Nothing is half-assed that leaves his desk. We did a couple of weeks of samples, and the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate were interested, and I think the **Times** was also interested. But then, at the last minute, Harlequin, for some reason or other, thought the strip was not a good idea. I don't know what they thought — whether we cheapened their books or cheapened the Harlequin name, because a lot of people, as you know,

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"Barbara Cartland ('s romances), I got Gray Morrow."

BUCK ROGERS
IN THE 25th CENTURY
THAT "HUMANITY" BEST "HAS TO HAVE" OUT TO BE A BAND OF FREEDOM GUERRILLAS — AS ANTI-THE POWER-MAD VOSTIAN REGENT AS OUR TWO TERRAN SCOUTS!
GOOD LUCK EARTHLINGS!
THE GUERRILLA CHIEF, SONEVA, GUIDES BUCK AND WILMA TO A CLIFF VANTAGE POINT FROM WHICH TO VIEW THE CAPITAL OF VOSTOK!
FANTASTIC! A WHOLE CITY CANTILEVERED OUT FROM THE CLIFFSIDE!

Another newspaper strip from the team of Lawrence & Morrow (BUCK ROGERS)

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think comic strips are garbage . . .

DAN: *Well, I don't think Harlequin's any great shakes . . .*

JIM: They were really riding the crest of a wave then, the Canadian company that had come out of nowhere and now dominating the field. Anyway, we had put together a beautiful piece of work. This was turning one of their books into a strip form. When they got cold feet and wouldn't proceed, I looked around and **Barbara Cartland** was becoming very popular at that moment. What the hell, I had nothing to lose. So I wrote her, thinking it was one chance in ten. Much to my amazement, soon after the letter arrived in London, her son, who was her business manager, called up and was willing to proceed. As it turned out, after the first story, it ran without me. She was quite picky.

The strip field is an extremely cut-throat, backstabbing business.

DAN: *Why is that, do you think? I don't think of comic strips as being viciously competitive.*

JIM: That's an interesting subject in itself. It probably is partly tied up with the history of comic strips. In the old days, when story strips were a profitable commodity — they no longer are — and the field was dominated by these famous strips that had run for a long time, it seemed to be rather a placid, gentlemanly business.

Certainly, newspaper syndicates are not an adventurous bunch. Jesus, they're a bunch of slow-moving, non-creative, reactionary people who, in general, were content to let things come to them.

DAN: *And newspaper editors are usually disinclined to change comic strips.*

"If you read the statistics about how many people read books —

DALLAS
by Lawrence and Harris
WHATEVER'S IN THAT NOTEBOOK MISS ELLIE'S WRITING IN?
BETTER ASK HER YOURSELF, PAM...
...MISS ELLIE AND I DON'T FIND MUCH TIME T'TALK THESE DAYS!
5-21
DALLAS
by Lawrence and Harris
MISS ELLIE, NOT TO BE NOSY — BUT HOW MANY NOTEBOOKS HAVE YOU FILLED?
QUITE A FEW, DEAR...
ACTUALLY, THE SCRIBBLING'S DONE NOW...
5-22
DO YOU KNOW A TYPIST WHO COULD HELP ME OUT?
Characters & likenesses TM & © 1981 Lorimar Productions, Inc. All rights reserved. Lic. Zix Dist. by Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

Based on the hit night time soap "Dallas" (Lawrence & Harris).

JIM: That's right. And why shouldn't they? Comics made millions for them in their heyday. I don't know why, but they never had the same attitude that television does. In television, they try a show and they'll run it for 13 weeks or 26 weeks or whatever. It's an experimental business. If one hits, they'll keep running it as long as it has fans. But that state of mind is totally unknown in the syndicates. They're not interested, in general, in a strip unless it can appeal to a wide spectrum of readers and unless they think it's going to continue for the next ten years, which is ridiculous. I guess nowadays they know better.

Almost from about the time I really broke into strips — even in the '50s, maybe — the handwriting was on the wall. Certainly, in the '60s, the handwriting became more visible. In the '70s, it became very visible, and in the '80s, it became highly visible. As the older story strips slowly withered on the vine — very slowly — it became harder and harder for syndicates to sell new story strips, and understandably so, I think, because in the '50s, television came of age. That provided, I think, the great mass of people with the source of their fantasy life. I think prior to that, radio and comic strips really — I don't know the statistics, but I would think that they probably reached even larger numbers of people than movies did.

DAN: *So it's probably television that's the culprit in the death of the adventure and the story strip. After all, you can see a whole episode in one sitting. You don't have to wait for weeks to see the outcome of the action.*

JIM: Well, that's exactly right, and not only that. There's no doubt that in this country, the full potential of comics have never been exploited as they have, I think, in Europe, even. It could be a serious art form if you wanted to make it that.

DAN: *It's still running up against prejudice, although I think less so now than in the old days.*

JIM: I think both those statements are true. The prejudice is still very, very strong. But the argument that a lot of people have used is that people will always look at pictures. They cite LIFE MAGAZINE as an example. If you read the statistics about how many people read books — printed books, words off the printed page — it's really only a small fraction of the population. Whereas everybody can look at pictures. And yet, when you're looking at pictures, I think the competition with television will always be extreme.

Everybody still hopes that this thing called the graphic novel will come of age. I hope it does, I sincerely hope it does and have spent a fair amount of energy in that direction myself, but increasingly I doubt it. When you stop to think that we have a generation raised on television — perhaps you among them . . .

DAN: *I'm at about the beginning. I was born in '54.*

JIM: Well, then, you and I probably don't even think in quite the same terms. Gag strips continue to flourish, so comic strips as a medium perhaps will continue for a long time. But as a true storytelling medium, I wonder.

DAN: *I don't know either. We tried at our newspapers here to do a few story strips, and I don't know that they ever acquired much of a following. I'm always hoping that sometime there will come some kind of a shift in taste. I'd like to see more variety on the comics page.*

JIM: I think part of the answer, Dan, is not only a lack of aggressiveness and creativity on the part of syndicates, but the fact that they have let strips become unimportant. They are smaller and

printed books, words off the printed page — it's really small."

smaller.

Look back at a strip like POPEYE, or as it used to be called, THIMBLE THEATER. Here you had four-column strips. I'm not sure of this, but I think it may even be that most strips would be four-panel in those days. Then as they made strips smaller and smaller, three panels became the standard. If you're a writer, you become very conscious of that. It used to be that I would regard 60 words as the desirable maximum. You can't do that anymore.

Of course, another effect of making the strips smaller is that they became less pictorial. If you look at an old strip, BRINGING UP FATHER, you had this lovely artwork in the background. But most notably, probably, was when **Roy Crane** was doing CAPTAIN EASY. There's no doubt in my mind that that man was a genius — not only a genius in his characters and the way he drew them, so full of life, so full of action — but also his ability to suggest seascapes and backgrounds. Well, that's gone. You can't do that anymore, no matter how good an artist you are, it's must impossible.

DAN: *Which means that story strips have a couple of more strikes against them now, because there are fewer words and the art is less detailed. So you have less of a chance to interest the audience?*

JIM: That's absolutely right. In the days when I was doing strips, I always sort of had in the back of my mind that you do three panels. In one of those panels, you show a full shot of the characters, whatever they were doing. Then in one panel, you might go into a closeup. Then you might have another panel that was a long shot that would show the characters and get in background as well. And the background there was really your only chance to set your scene. You can't do it nowadays and still have room for balloons. So unless you're doing a strip which is a pantomime strip, it's just not a viable operation. But you see, I don't believe that syndicates had to go along with that. I think they could have put their foot down and insisted.

DAN: *I wonder about the future of comics. They say that the market for comic books now is people in their late teens and twenties who spend something like $40 a month on them. Will the kids growing up now have any interest in comics? I'm not sure.*

JIM: Since so much of my book work has been in these juvenile books, I would say that, in general, through the '50s and '60s and '70s, juvenile book editors tended to be either gals who had been English majors in college and wanted to get into publishing or jumped-up secretaries. They had been a secretary to an editor, and when he retired, they gave the secretary a shot at the job . . .

DAN: *In either case, they knew little about what they were going to be doing.*

JIM: Exactly. And of course the English majors had a notion of "art." and they'd turn up their nose, and you'd get this terrible dichotomy between what people read and what juvenile book editors think children like to read. And, since most of them were women, I've always felt it's very, very hard to do boy-type stories. I've read this quote many times, that TREASURE ISLAND wouldn't stand a chance today, no lady editor would buy it.

I think, seriously, that the prevailing tenor of juvenile books has turned off a whole generation of boy readers. For a long time, it's been conventional wisdom that girls read books more than boys. The discrepancy has become greater and greater. And one reason is that they don't publish books boys want to read. That's why boys turn to comic books, because they want to get a little color, adventure, action.

DAN: *Well, with the Hardy Boys,' with Bond, all these things, you seem to be a writer who is, if not comfortable, at least capable of working within the restrictions of an established series. Have you grown accustomed to that, or does that rankle you?*

JIM: You're certainly right that I've done it all my life. And I wish I hadn't, in some ways. On the other hand, as I look back, whatever I've done, I've given it my best shot. Generally speaking, I'm proud of what I've done. It has always been hard work. I don't think there is any harder work than writing. But it has been fun. I'm lucky to be able to work for myself. As freelancers go, I certainly haven't gotten rich, but I've managed to survive and raise a family. And not too many guys who are not bestselling writers — which I am not, unhappily — have managed to do as well as I have.

Part of that is that I have always been willing to write anything that somebody would pay me to write, and I've had the good luck to write for a variety of media, which I think is useful, too. From almost all writers and artists, you hear the same story. Probably **Shakespeare** thought that someday he'd stop writing for commercial theater and write really good stuff.

DAN: *I wanted to ask you about writing for THE GREEN HORNET — what was that like?*

JIM: Well, that was fun, too. Actually in those days, those network shows were produced at a station which originally had been WGHP and then became WXYZ. I lived not too many blocks away from the studio. The guy who it always says it was created by . . .

DAN: *Fran Striker?*

JIM: Well, **Fran Striker** created it, but then he didn't get his name on it.

DAN: *Oh, wait. Trendle?*

JIM: **George Trendle.** That horse's ass.

007 receives orders from a Yugoslavian "M" in OPERACIJA "ROGINJA MORA", written by Jim Lawrence and drawn by Yaroslav Horak.

SPOJNIČE STE DA NEKO NIJE UMEŠAN U DOGAĐAJE?
TEŠKO JE PRETPOSTAVITI DA JE NEKO MOGAO TO DA URADI!
IZTRAJ, IMA NEČIJU REČENICU U SVAKU TOME. NESTANAK HELIKOPTERA, KRIJA I SLIČNO.
ALI NAŠA DUŽNOST JE DA ONEMOGUĆIMO BILO ČIJE AGENTE KOJI POKUŠAJU DA SE UMEŠAJU U OVU STVAR!

"The strip field is an extremely cut-throat, backstabbing business."

BERT...THINGS...ARE... I'VE GOT TO...RING OFF NOW.
NOEL!
HEY! A LIVE ONE!
LEAPIN' LASERS! WHAT IN OUTER SPACE IS GOING ON AROUND HERE?
WAIT, FRANK...
LISTEN, NOEL, DON'T FIGHT IT! MRS. O'TOOLE ACCIDENTALLY GOT INFECTED WITH THE LOVE BUG! WE'VE GOT TO GET HER OUT OF HERE WITHOUT A SCANDAL!
HERE'S HER HAND BAG... AH!
HER HUSBAND IS LT. TERENCE O'TOOLE OF THE BAYFAIR POLICE DEPT. VICE SQUAD.
YUP!! THAT'S MY HUBBY! "BULLETS" O'TOOLE THEY CALL HIM!
HOLY HANNUKAH! DON'T CALL THAT COSSACK! YOU WANT TO GET US RIDDLED? HE LEADS THE DEPARTMENT IN CITATIONS FOR SHOOTING FLEEING GHETTO RESIDENTS IN THE BACK!!
© 1980 Lawrence/Springer

FRANK FLEET started out as a book, but got converted into a visual serial for THE EVERGREEN REVIEW (1969-70). Artist Frank Springer and Jim thought it wisest to use aliases: Strong & Sterling.

He was just a lawyer who got his hooks into things and got control of it. So thereafter it was created by him. Actually, I think **Jim Jewell**, who was a director, had a pretty fair claim to creative input in those days. But basically it was Fran's job. You'd see **Trendle** driving up in his Lincoln Continental and his expensive clothes and so on, and he'd come into the studio. But once a week we'd have to gather, and he would call us in one by one and tell us what was wrong with our scripts and what had to be changed. That was pretty hard to put up with.

DAN: *Did he have any clue about dramatic writing?*

JIM: Well, he certainly thought he did. But he wasn't all that onerous, and it was fun. But he was a good deal of a pain in the ass.

And certainly **Fran Striker** created a money machine, and he never really got decent credit, and there was a period just before I began writing for them in which he was replaced by a guy named **Felix Holt** who used to work for one of the Detroit papers. He came in as editor. Then he moved away to Pennsylvania and wrote a novel which became a bestseller and kicked the bucket soon after. During the time he was working on his novel, the positions were reversed. He was sending in scripts to Fran, and I'm sure Fran treated them fairly. In fairness, **Felix Holt** was an editor who was a writer himself, so I have a little more respect for him than I have for most editors.

Most of the time, I wrote for a show which was then called CHALLENGE OF THE YUKON, and subsequently became SGT. PRESTON OF THE YUKON. We were free to write for whatever we wanted. Any of the shows they put on, we could write for.

DAN: *You never wrote for THE LONE RANGER, though?*

JIM: I did one LONE RANGER, and did some GREEN HORNETS. **Jim Jewell**, who had been one of the original directors of THE LONE RANGER, had broken up with **Trendle** and had gone to Chicago and created JACK ARMSTRONG. But JACK ARMSTRONG was coming to an end, and he wanted to do a Mountie show. And I'd been writing SGT. PRESTON, so he hired me to write this show, which was called THE SILVER EAGLE. Before THE SILVER EAGLE went on the air, I had a chance to write JACK ARMSTRONG as well. THE SILVER EAGLE is little-remembered these days, but it was a very successful show. In the ratings, we had the satisfaction of beating out SGT. PRESTON.

FRAZETTA

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JAMES BOND

Art by Neal Adams & Dan Giordano.

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JAMES BOND BOOKS BY OTHERS

COLONEL SUN (1968) by Robert Markham (Kingsley Amis) • JAMES BOND — THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF 007 (1973) by John Pearson (not a Bond adventure but the biography of James Bond, with an explanation of his ties to Ian Fleming and the purpose of Fleming's novels)

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ALLIGATOR by I*n Fl*m*ng (A HARVARD LAMPOON PARODY) • "Bond Strikes Camp" by Cyril Connolly (LONDON MAGAZINE, written at Ian Fleming's behest) • Israel Bond, Oy Oy 7 stories by Sol Weinstein (various issues of PLAYBOY) • The Liquidator books by John Gardner • MAD MAGAZINE, various issues • many others

OTHER BOOKS BY IAN FLEMING

THE BLACK DAFFODIL (poetry, privately printed, Fleming later destroyed all available copies) • CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG • THE DIAMOND SMUGGLERS • STATE OF EXCITEMENT (banned, never published, one known copy exists) • THRILLING CITIES (contains "007 in New York")

OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST

BIRDS OF THE WEST INDIES by James Bond • THE BOOK OF BOND, OR EVERY MAN HIS OWN 007 by Lt.-Col. William "Bill" Tanner (Kingsley Amis) • THE BOND AFFAIR by Oreste del Buono and Umberto Eco • 007 JAMES BOND: A REPORT by O.F. Snelling • FOR BOND LOVERS ONLY, Sheldon Lane ed. • FOR YOUR EYES ONLY by the James Bond British Fan Club • HOW 007 GOT HIS NAME by Mary Wickham Bond • IAN FLEMING: A CATALOGUE OF A COLLECTION by Iain Campbell • IAN FLEMING: THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN PEN by Richard Gant • IAN FLEMING: THE SPY WHO CAME IN WITH THE GOLD by Henry A. Zeiger • IAN FLEMING, 28th MAY, 1980 — 12th AUGUST, 1964 (memorial) by William Plomer • JAMES BOND — A CELEBRATION by Peter Haining • THE JAMES BOND BEDSIDE COMPANION by Raymond Benson • THE JAMES BOND DOSSIER by Kingsley Amis • THE JAMES BOND FILMS by Steven Jay Rubin • JAMES BOND IN THE CINEMA by John Brosnan • THE JAMES BOND TRIVIA QUIZ BOOK by Philip Gurin • THE LIFE OF IAN FLEMING (ALIAS JAMES BOND) by John Pearson • THE OFFICIAL JAMES BOND 007 MOVIE BOOK and THE OFFICIAL JAMES BOND 007 MOVIE POSTER BOOK by Sally Hibbin • THE PISTOL by Geoffrey Boothroyd •

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! – NOT YET AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION

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JAMES BOND COMIC BOOKS (Not Yet According to Overstreet)

JAMES BOND 007 (limited series) • LICENSE TO KILL (movie adaptation) • MAD MAGAZINE, various issues (get with it, Bob)

JAMES BOND MAGAZINES

BONDAGE • 007

JAMES BOND COMIC STRIP

Adaptations of Fleming which ran in THE DAILY EXPRESS, some of the stories have recently been collected and published in book editions by the James Bond 007 Fan Club and by Titan Book.

FILMS AND PROGRAMS POSSIBLY OF INTEREST TO JAMES BOND READERS

CASINO ROYALE: Barry Nelson as James Bond, with Peter Lorre, Linda Christian, others (1954), an installment from the CBS TV program CLIMAX MYSTERY THEATER

DR. NO: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Ursula Andress, Joseph Wiseman, Jack Lord, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell (1962)

FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Daniela Bianchi, Lotte Lenya, Pedro Armendariz, Robert Shaw, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell (1963)

GOLDFINGER: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Gert Frobe, Honor Blackman, Shirley Eaton, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Harold Sakat, Tania Mallett (1964)

THUNDERBALL: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Claudine Auger, Adolpho Celi, Luciana Pulazzi, Rik Van Nutter, Martine Beswick, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewellyn, Roland Culver (1965)

THE INCREDIBLE WORLD OF JAMES BOND: (1965, TV special)

CASINO ROYALE: David Niven as Sir James Bond, with Peter Sellers, Ursula Andress, Orson Welles, Joanna Pettet, Woody Allen, Deborah Kerr, William Holden, Charles Boyer, John Huston, George Raft, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Jacqueline Bisset (1967, parody)

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Akiko Wakabayashi, Tetsuro Tamba, Mie Hama, Karin Dor, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewellyn, Donald Pleasence (1967)

CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG: Dick Van Dyke, Sally Ann Howes, Lionel Jeffries, Gert Frobe, Anna Quayle, Benny Hill (1968, based on a children's story by Ian Fleming, not a Bond film)

ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE: George Lazenby as James Bond, with Diana Rigg, Gabriele Ferzetti, Telly Savalas, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewellyn (1969)

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Jill St. John, Charles Gray, Lana Wood, Jimmy Dean, Bruce Cabot, Bruce Glover, Putter Smith, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewellyn, Leonard Barr, Laurence Naismith (1971)

LIVE AND LET DIE: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Yaphet Kotto, Jane Seymour, Clifton James, Geoffrey Holder, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell (1973)

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Christopher Lee, Britt Ekland, Maud Adams, Herve Villechaize, Clifton James, Richard Loo, Marc Lawrence, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewellyn (1974)

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Barbara Bach, Curt Jurgens, Richard Kiel, Caroline Munro, Bernard Lee, Lois Maxwell, Desmond Llewellyn (1977)

MOONRAKER: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Lois Chiles, Michael Lonsdale, Richard Kiel, Corinne Clery, Bernard Lee, Desmond Llewellyn, Lois Maxwell (1979)

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Carole Bouquet, Topol, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Julian Glover, Jill Bennett, Cassandra Harris, Desmond Llewellyn, Lois Maxwell (1981)

JAMES BOND THE FIRST 21 YEARS: (1983, TV special)

OCTOPUSSY: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Maud Adams, Louis Jordan, Kristina Wayborn, Kabir Bedi, Steven Berkoff, Desmond Llewellyn, Vijay Amritraj, Lois Maxwell (1983)

NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN: Sean Connery as James Bond, with Klaus Maria Brandauer, Max von Sydow, Barbara Carrera, Kim Bassinger, Bernie Casey, Alec McCowen, Edward Fox (1983)

A VIEW TO A KILL: Roger Moore as James Bond, with Christopher Walken, Tanya Roberts, Grace Jones, Patrick Macnee, Patrick Bauchau, Fiona Fullerton, Desmond Llewellyn, Robert Brown, Lois Maxwell (1985)

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY 007 or JAMES BOND, LICENSE TO THRILL: (1987, TV special)

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS: Timothy Dalton as James Bond, with Maryam d'Abo, Jeroen Krabbe, Joe Don Baker, John Rhys-Davies, Art Malik, Andreas Wisniewski, Desmond Llewellyn, Robert Brown, Geoffrey Keen, Walter Gotell, Caroline Bliss (1987)

!LICENSE TO KILL: Timothy Dalton as James Bond, cast information not available at this time (1989)

"People have asked why it took so long (to do James Bond). It

MIKE GRELL

Photo: D. Beck.

Bond, James Bond, is one of those extraordinary creations for which the traditional scales determining success are inadequate, because its success transcends quantification. Here is a literary character which first saw print in 1953, which has been published throughout the Western world and in a few other places besides, which has been successfully adapted into other forms, which has been copied around the globe in all manner of media, to which there has been no end of parodies and such, and which has been successfully continued in the literary form beyond the death of its creator, Ian Fleming — who deserves much of the credit.

We must also credit James Bond's adaptability, not simply for transplanting into other media, but for surviving both the passage of time, and passage to other hands, other interpretations — and let us also give credit to those interpreters. But change brings tensions of uncertainty and fear, embodied in questions such as: Will it be done right? And, truth to tell, sometimes the results have been not quite as successful as they have at other times, so such concerns are not unfounded. Therefore, when I learned of the upcoming JAMES BOND 007 comic book, I felt some anxiety.

Mainly, while I am a great fan of the graphic storytelling medium, I have come to expect very little of it, when it comes to borrowing from other media, the results of which haven't traditionally been of the highest caliber — in fact, at times they have more served to redefine the lowest caliber. But that having been said, this has less been the case in recent years than in previous history, and there have always been tremendous exceptions; and in the

All art accompanying this interview is © 1989 by Mike Grell/Eclipse Comics/Glidrose Productions, unless otherwise noted.

was a decision based on what's been happening in comics."

Illustration by Mike Grell

particular matter of JAMES BOND 007 the stated plans were to produce a quality package for simultaneous publication in both Great Britain and the United States, which was certainly a good sign.

More important, the creator of these books seemed perfectly suited to the task. He is Grell, Mike Grell, whose WARLORD thrilled and fascinated one and all, whose GREEN ARROW stands out as vibrant human drama in a genre not generally noted for depth, and whose character Jon Sable was something of a James Bond type, not in the trappings but in the deep and hard to reach areas where it really counts. This was definitely a good sign. Still, I harbored nagging doubts that Mike Grell might not live up to the responsibility, but that is only natural. Until I actually read the books and decide for myself . . . well, I won't believe it until I see it, that's just the way I am.

Ergo: this interview.

After all, this was the perfect opportunity to put Mike Grell to the test and find out just how well suited or unsuited he might be to handle James Bond. I got my answer, and now it is for you to judge . . .

DARREL L. BOATZ: *To start off with, Mike, one of your #1 fans, Hank Edley here in Macomb, said to tell you thumbs up.*

MIKE GRELL: Thumbs up, **Hank Edley.** Tell Hank I said thanks, I appreciate that.

DARREL: *We're supposed to be talking about the new James Bond series that you're doing, so let's get to it. Why are you doing JAMES BOND 007?*

MIKE: Why not! That's a silly question, but probably not so silly after all. A lot of people have asked why it took so long. First, the reason *I* am doing it is that I was called by Acme Press out of London,

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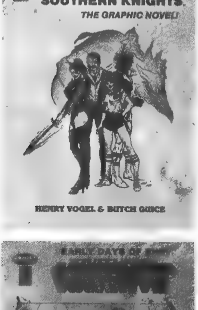

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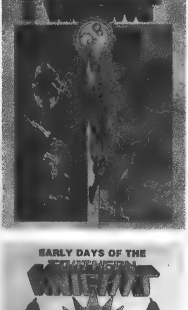

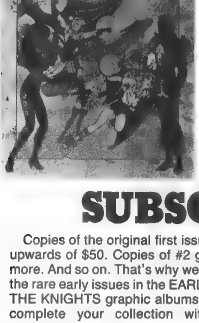

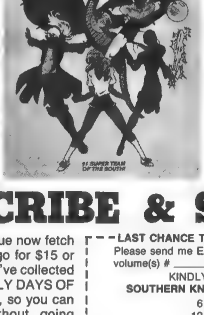

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"Cary Bates is probably one of the bigger Bond fans that I know."

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Mike Grell
Born: 13 September 1947 — Iron Mountain, MI, because it's the nearest hospital to my hometown in Florence, WI
Occupation: I'm a cartoonist. A lot of other guys may be comics artists or illustrators, but I think they're being snobs. Hal Foster considered himself a cartoonist, and if it's good enough for Foster then it's good enough for me. Somebody asked me once whether I considered myself primarily an artist or a writer. Faced with that choice I said I considered myself to be a storyteller.
Credits: JAMES BOND 007; WARLORD; JON SABLE; STARSLAYER; THE LONG-BOW HUNTERS; GREEN ARROW; the 1970s revival of GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW; LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES; I'd like a certain amount of credit for having worked on BRENDA STARR; the TARZAN comic strip in the Sunday papers for two years
Favorite James Bond Story: In high school a rather sizable army of us trooped off to see GOLDFINGER for the first time. I had read the books so Pussy Galore wasn't a surprise to me, but I probably should have warned Buzzy Schultz. When Honor Blackman introduced herself on screen as Pussy Galore, Buzzy lost all control of himself and laughed so hard and so loud and so long that the rest of us had to get up and move to the other side of the theater. And every time she would show up on screen, Buzzy burst out laughing — I don't think anyone enjoyed that movie nearly as much as he did. In the car going home that night about every five minutes or so Buzzy would shout, "Pussy Galore, Pussy Galore! AA-HAHAHAHAA —"

Pen & ink portrait by Mike.

they were contacted by the people from Glidrose, who control the literary rights to James Bond. Apparently, it was a mutual decision based on what's been happening in general in the comics industry, and also the current push to renew and revitalize James Bond in the films. And it was decided that *now* was the time to do an original James Bond comic-book feature. I think the reason that it's being done now is a *combination* of things, but mostly because of the changes that have come about in the comics industry in the not so distant past.

DARREL: *With the prestige formats and —*

MIKE: I think that has a certain amount to do with it, and the amount of exposure that the comics industry has gotten in all forms of the press *worldwide*, with books on the nature of THE DARK KNIGHT. Comic books have really come of age and a lot more people are taking note of them as a *serious* artform — and a serious means of making a rather sizable amount of money for rather minimal output. And another reason that I think

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"Comic books have really come of age and people are taking note."

James Bond is a viable double project right now is that there's been a change-over in the trend in comics *as well* as in the Bond movies, to stories that deal a great deal *more* with characterization and less with "shoot 'em up, bang bang." Now naturally when you're talking about a character like James Bond, you *are* talking about a serious *action* character. But there was a time during the later run of the **Roger Moore** films when Bond himself became almost a comedic character.

DARREL: *It was almost a parody of Bond.*

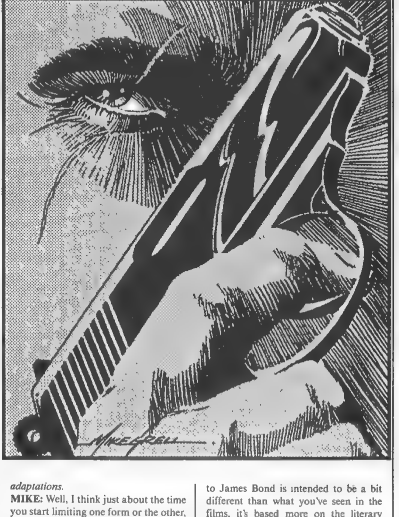
MIKE: Absolutely. And there has been a concerted effort, I believe, on the part of the movie people, to change that thrust from the flamboyant special effects type film that has very little plot or substance to hold it together, and also relies heavily on the comedy to fill in the gaps, to a very strong film based on characterization, more so than relying on gimmicks to carry the day. And I think with those *changes* it made it that much more possible to do this comic. I have a good friend **Cary Bates** who is *probably* one of the bigger James Bond fans that I know, and Cary had pointed out to me years ago that Warner Brothers/DC Comics had a certain claim to James Bond since they had done a movie adaptation of DR. NO. Now, whether or not that was a legal claim or whatever, I don't know, but apparently for a time period *after* they had done the first adaptation, DC had an option to produce James Bond comic books — and they never did.

They regarded it as something that wasn't action-filled enough to carry the day. I asked what he meant by that. Well, it's very simple, if you take a scene like in THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN where a car jumps ramp to ramp and rotates 360 degrees in midair and lands back on its wheels, all done live at high speeds with a real car and real drivers and everything else, you see that on film and it's breathtaking — when you see it in a comic book it's three or four panels across the page, a few pencil strokes, and big deal.

DARREL: *It's thrilling in the movie because you know that that was a stunt that somebody had to do, and it's got that live vitality to it.*

MIKE: Absolutely.

DARREL: *But it would seem to me that comics could do things that they couldn't do in the movies. I can't think of any examples offhand, of course, because there haven't been any James Bond comics that haven't been film adaptations.*



MIKE: Well, I think just about the time you start limiting one form or the other, someone is going to make a liar out of you. *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *That's true. How long has this project been underway?*

MIKE: Forever. I was contacted originally in December of 1987 — I had just returned from a trip to Australia and Singapore, the message was waiting for me when I returned. It was several months after that before any substantive negotiations were able to begin, because there was the necessity to finish the contract negotiations between Acme Press in London and Eclipse Comics in the United States, and Gildrose and myself and everything else — anyone in the comics business will tell you that *that* is where the majority of the time goes.

DARREL: *What kind of story can we expect in JAMES BOND 007?*

MIKE: You can expect a relatively real world story that will be heavy on characterization as well as action. My approach to James Bond is intended to be a bit different than what you've seen in the films, it's based more on the literary James Bond than on the cinematic James Bond, although there are elements certainly of both. The films were drawn from the novels, and in later years, when **John Gardner** took over the writing of the James Bond series of novels, the novels were influenced in large part, it would *appear* at any rate, by the films.

What I am doing essentially is dealing with the James Bond persona as, I would guess it would be safe to say, as a worldwide *myth*. James Bond is one of the universal heroic figures, an icon, instantly recognizable by *anyone* when you mention the name. There are only a few characters, comic-book characters or literary characters in general, who conjure up that sort of instant recognition — Mickey Mouse, Superman, Sherlock Holmes, Frankenstein. You're dealing with something here that has *already* a universal image, and what I have to do is take that image and turn it

Grell's Model for Bond: "I had gone to Ian Fleming's

into something *other* than what you've seen before. And boy, I'm doing my best.

My stories are tending to be heavy on characterization and filled with the same sort of flamboyant dynamic action that you would *expect* from a good movie with relatively *minimal* special effects. Certainly there's enough "shoot 'em up, bang bang" to satisfy almost anyone, and enough elaborate sets to inspire a Hollywood aficionado — but I draw the line at things that are just beyond the realm of possibility or probability. The gimmicks and gadgetry that are employed in the book are all things that actually exist, the scientific principles I'm dealing with are being experimented with right now, the machinery is out there in at *least* prototype form. Essentially, I've taken the *fantasy* out of James Bond, at least the technological fantasy. Of course Bond is relatively a fantasy character when thought of in terms of the real world of espionage.

DARREL: *There was always, going back to Fleming, some element of science fiction in the high-tech gadetry, but in the Fleming books it all had at least the potential of actually existing, according to what they knew then.*

MIKE: Certainly. **John Gardner** has done a very good job of bringing that back, actually. **Gardner** takes a great deal of pride in the research that he does on his material, and has — I don't know if he's exactly sworn an *oath* — but he has stated outright that nothing in his books is made up. It's all very carefully researched and based on real items of equipment and technology. I've done basically the same thing.

DARREL: *Anything you can tell us about specifically?*

MIKE: Yes, to a certain extent. I've updated Bond's weaponry — again, following the example of **John Gardner** in the novels. **Gardner** did away with the Walther PPK, and I haven't *exactly* done that because it's part and parcel with the James Bond image, but I have incorporated a new pistol in what I'm using, the ASP. It's a modified version of the Smith & Wesson 9mm, Model 39, and *graphically* it's a terrific looking pistol.

DARREL: *That's ASP?*

MIKE: Right, it stands for Armament Systems Products.

DARREL: *Well —*

MIKE: And there's something that I'd like to clear up here; there seems to be a bit of confusion based on an AMAZING HEROES interview that I did, when I said that I had been rather pleased that my version of James Bond came out looking a bit like something between **Timothy Dalton** and **Sean Connery**. Actually that was taken slightly out of context. The question that they had asked was who I was using for a model for James Bond, and I said very clearly that I had gone to **Ian Fleming's** original model for the *physical* look of James Bond, which is **Hoagy Carmichael**. They left that part out.

A young **Hoagy Carmichael** indeed does have very similar features to **Sean Connery** and **Timothy Dalton**. The rather long nose I've bobbed ever so slightly, because **Carmichael's** got a little carried away. *(Laughter)* But the angular jawline and the deep creases in the side of the face, as well as the long, arched, rather thick eyebrows — a very *distinctive* look - and I was able to manipulate his features a bit and come up with a different looking character, with different hair and a different nose and a slightly changed jawline. It doesn't look exactly like **Sean Connery**, it doesn't look exactly like **Timothy Dalton**, and it doesn't look *exactly* like **Hoagy Carmichael**, but the three of them have enough similar characteristics that there is a mutual resemblance.

physical look of James Bond, which is Hoagy Carmichael."

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DARREL: *Which also fits with what Fleming wrote.*

MIKE: Right.

DARREL: *In CASINO ROYALE, the first book, he has one of the characters stating that Bond reminds her of Hoagy Carmichael, but later on Bond looks at himself in the mirror and thinks he doesn't look like Hoagy Carmichael at all.*

MIKE: That's right. My James Bond also has the scar.

DARREL: *Down the right cheek.*

MIKE: Right. I've changed it ever so slightly. **Fleming's** version had it beginning below his right eye and running vertically down the cheek. Now I'll grant you this was 35 years ago and at that point cosmetic surgery hadn't progressed to the point that it has now, but in reality it would be very doubtful that an agent of this caliber would walk around with a scar like that on his face, they would cover it up.'

DARREL: *Because a secret agent wouldn't have such a distinctive mark to give him away.*

MIKE: Right. Well, what I've done is I've taken a hairline scar, run it down through the eyebrow, there's a tiny slash running through the eyebrow — as if he were in this knife fight and was moving *backward* and the knife just cut through the brow, missed the eye, and caught the cheek again on the way down.

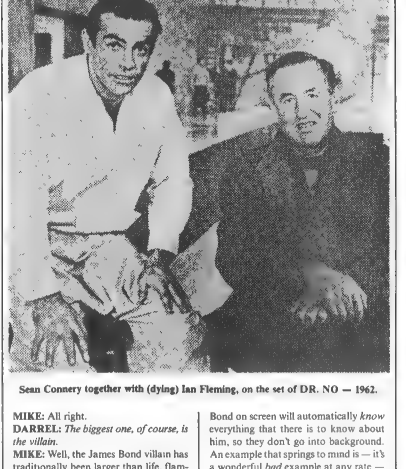
DARREL: *Wow. I know a guy who has a scar kind of like that that he got in a knife fight.*

MIKE: So do I, as a matter of fact. He got his in a car accident, and it was absolutely flamboyant. It ran from about an inch and a half above his eyebrow, down through the eyebrow, and then probably two inches down his cheek, and had been suitably stitched in true Frankenstein fashion. It was a very striking, distinctive feature of his face. He was a very good looking man to begin with, but this thing gave him a sort of a piratical look, and he took one look at himself in the mirror and decided to hell with the cosmetic surgery and kept the scar. *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *Well, I've got a little list here — I want to try and get a real understanding of what a Mike Grell James Bond is going to be. There are a lot of traditional aspects to a Bond adventure —*

MIKE: Absolutely.

DARREL: *I've just got a list of things here, I want to go down the list and have you talk about these aspects according to your understanding of them and what you are doing in your own stories.*



Sean Connery together with (dying) Ian Fleming, on the set of DR. NO — 1962.

MIKE: All right.

DARREL: *The biggest one, of course, is the villain.*

MIKE: Well, the James Bond villain has traditionally been larger than life, flamboyant, megalomain . . . megalomaniacal — hey, I said it. *(Laughter)* With a suitable plot in mind to make him worthy of the attention of the world's greatest secret agent. Frequently the villain has been in many terms more interesting than Bond himself. And in writing my own characters, I've found that I've had to make a concerted effort to go back and flesh out the Bond character, to make it certain that this was a book that starred James Bond and not simply a book that included James Bond.

DARREL: *You think the villains are frequently more interesting than Bond. That's curious, I find Bond a very interesting character, and I'd like to know why you said that.*

MIKE: I think Bond in the novels is a very interesting character, but Bond in the movies has been, in more recent years, a relatively two-dimensional character, because they've come to the assumption that anyone who sees James Bond on screen will automatically *know* everything that there is to know about him, so they don't go into background. An example that springs to mind is — it's a wonderful *bad* example at any rate — are the **Sylvester Stallone** RAMBO movies. FIRST BLOOD was complete character development and background. The second movie was a very brief character development, or a very brief character background but no further development of the character. The third movie was just taking the characters as they had already been established, not telling *anything* about them at all, simply a muscle-bound guy and a military type running around blowing things up.

That's the stage that I feel a number of the Bond films reached, to where it wasn't terribly important to tell about Bond, his background, the life that he had, how he came into the Service, what might be at work influencing his decisions as a character. That's the kind of thing that I'm *trying* to avoid in my book, but of course I'm not writing a novel here, I'm limited to the page count and very limited in what I can tell about anyone in general. So given the fact that

"Rather than being a straightforward adventure, this is complex."

Bond is more universally understood and recognized, there's a strong *tendency* to slack off on the characterization of the leading character. So when you take a character like Bond, as he has been set up either in the books or in the movies, generally you will find that in the early presentations of the character, since we're still *defining* his character, you learn more about James Bond himself than you do in the later episodes or later installments, however you want to call it.

However, the villain *has* to be fully introduced and fully developed and fully characterized in order for you to understand his motivations, his desires, his designs, the quirks and foibles of his character. A really good example of that — actually a pretty fair blend of *both* was done in NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN. We were introduced to an older Bond struggling to keep up with today's technology, changes in sociopolitical atmospheres within his own organization, as well as the changes in the rest of the world. And then we had **Klaus Maria Brandauer** as this *wonderful* villain, probably the most charismatic Bond villain since Goldfinger.

DARREL: *Yes, that was one of my favorite movies of that year. It was much better than OCTOPUSSY, which came out about the same time.*

MIKE: Right. And again, if you look at the two, you had **Roger Moore** taking the character that was already in place and just continuing on from there, as opposed to doing anything *with* the character, developing him or bringing him from one stage to another. Change is a key factor in writing any good character, and unless your character changes in some way, or learns something or comes to a realization or has something interesting to say about all of this, by the time it's done then it's generally just basically "shoot 'em up, bang bang."

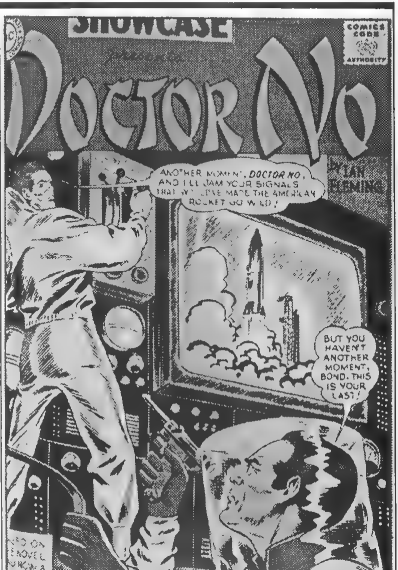
DARREL: *Who is your villain?*

MIKE: My villain . . . actually there are a number of characters who fall under that category, but more or less as intermediate characters in the development of the whole story, and as supporting characters to the ultimate *central* villain of the piece. The character's name is Eric *Voidjadlo* — actually I believe that's pronounced *vydjlo*, but I have no idea.

DARREL: *Could you spell that, please?*

MIKE: (Laughs) Not if I was *paid* for it! (Laughter) Hold on for a moment, I have it written down. It's Hungarian and Czech. I have it here, Widziadlo. Got it?

DARREL: *Widziadlo. He's the big villain.*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IAN FLEMING
ANOTHER WOMAN, DOCTOR NO, AND I'LL JAM YOUR SIGNALS THAT WILL MAKE THE AMERICAN ROCKET GO WILD!
BUT YOU HAVEN'T ANOTHER MOMENT, BOND. THIS IS YOUR LAST!
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY IAN FLEMING
UNITED FEATURE

Movie adaptation of DR. NO, originally done for CLASSICS III Series (cover reproduced here from DC's SHOWCASE #43).

MIKE: He's the central *antagonist*. I hesitate to call him a villain per se, although he is if you're going to speak of him in terms of the traditional James Bond context. And he doesn't show up until the third book.

DARREL: *So he's kind of like Blofeld, operating behind the scenes?*

MIKE: Not like Blofeld, but yes, operating behind the scenes. Everything that happens in the first two books is directly related to him in one fashion or another.

DARREL: *The second item on the list is the villain's scheme, which you spoke about a little bit here.*

MIKE: Yes, to a certain extent. I hesitate to give away too much because the ultimate plot is, of course, the ultimate solution to the mystery involved here. Rather than just being a straightforward adventure, this is a suitably *complex* plot that I hope will have the readers guessing as to what the *real* motivation and what the *real* plans are, right up until the end. Suffice it to say that the basic setup for the plot is that Bond has received orders to go to Hungary to help a woman escape from behind the Iron Curtain. She is Edaine Gayla, the niece of Erik Widziadlo, and she's been trapped behind

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"Frequently the villain has been more interesting than Bond himself."

the Iron Curtain since Widziadlo made his escape after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The reason that Bond is sent is that Widziadlo has invented a process, or a system I should say, for launching unmanned satellites into orbit at an *extremely* low price. This system is based on something that is currently under development at the University of Washington not ten blocks from where I'm sitting, and is rather complex in some ways, but also very simple in others. It's almost like a giant *gun* that fires the rocket from an earthbound station. The projectile doesn't carry any rocket fuel itself, it's all contained within the launching system, and the ultimate breakdown of this comes down to once the initial cost of construction has been absorbed, the overall cost to put a satellite into orbit can be brought down to as little as a dollar a pound.

DARREL: *Oh, my God, that's incredible! And they're working on that right near where you're at?*

MIKE: Yes, they are. The prototype that they've built is 40 feet long, in reality one capable of putting a satellite into Earth orbit, in order to accelerate into the necessary velocity, would have to be several *miles* long, I believe. In short, Bond is sent to bring back the girl to be traded for the technology. Widziadlo is operating out of a base in northern Idaho, where he has taken refuge since his escape from behind the Iron Curtain, and has been conducting all of his experiments on a completely *independent* basis, unfunded by government research grants or anything else, which gives him sole claim to the technology. And essentially he is willing to *part* with this in exchange for his niece.

DARREL: *Which is the next item on the list, the Bond girl.*

MIKE: The Bond girl, right. Bond girls have traditionally been beautiful, reasonably intelligent, but with absolutely no control of their emotions when it regards climbing into the sack with James Bond. In the films and in the books it's been almost a *constant* case of strong female protagonists losing all control of themselves when faced with the *wonderfulness* of James Bond's vibrating anatomy. *(Laughter)* Pussy Galore is a *classic* bad example; a woman who has been a lesbian all of her life and not only becomes presumably a devoted heterosexual, but also turns her back on her past alliances quite readily as soon as she is taken to bed by James Bond. That's totally unreal and it won't happen in my books.

DARREL: *Well, I was just reading THE JAMES BOND BEDSIDE COMPANION, and one of the comments in there was that the Bond girls that Fleming wrote are essentially '80s women in a sense, more liberated but without having gone through the liberation movement of the '60s and '70s and so on.*

MIKE: That's actually a pretty interesting observation. I would not necessarily take exception with that except in certain terms. **Fleming's** female characters, certainly in terms of world experience and things like that, were quite advanced for the time period when he was writing. But you would have to eliminate the idea of a women's liberation movement — if you could remove that from society and then take women as they would be in the 1980s having progressed without that, I think you'd be fairly close. In the movies, however, that's been not really the case, very rarely the case. There have been a few cases where the female character has turned out to be quite *strong* and perfectly capable.

But *then* you have the case of somebody like poor **Grace Jones**, who was in A VIEW TO A KILL. She spent the entire movie as one of James Bond's

Roger Moore, portraying Bond for the fifth time, consults with director John Glen on the set of FOR YOUR EYES ONLY.

© 1980 United Artists

"Bond girls have traditionally been beautiful

primary antagonists, she was so *capable* that she seemingly *bested* him at every turn, and at the end of the movie, when they're in the exploding cavern, Bond takes her by the hand as they run out of the tunnel, and Grace turns instantly into another squealer. She screams her way out into daylight, practically That was so untypical of what the character *had* been for all of the film, it was a bit out of place.

DARREL: *Yeah. Fleming wrote these women who were independent and had a lot of control over their own lives, but there was a strong element of chauvinism in his writing as well.—*

MIKE: Yes

DARREL: *Before they meet James Bond they've got this strong character, and then they meet him and turn to mush.*

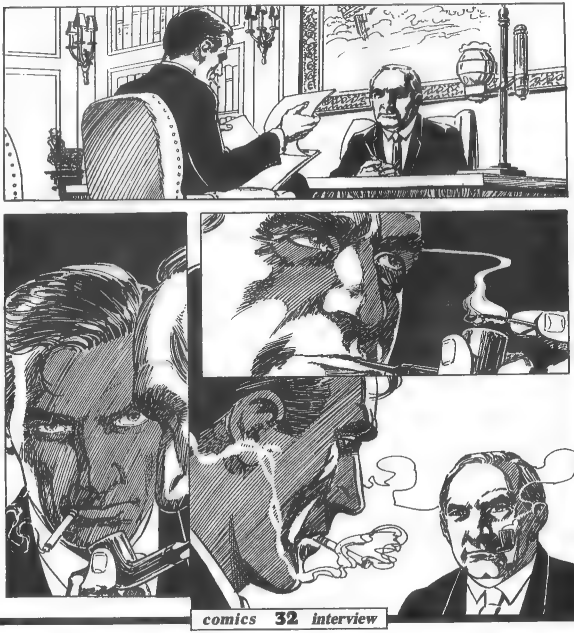
MIKE: Right. Now, my stories, if they deal with a character who is going to change alliances, for whatever reasons, it'll be for a better reason than the fact that James Bond can presumably make certain parts of the anatomy vibrate at will. *(Laughter)* It's not *unheard* of that people who've had even lifetime indoctrination will change alliances if given the proper motivation, but I just feel that the proper motivation would have to be a little bit more than sex.

DARREL: *It seems to me that in a few instances Fleming had the women change alliances for more than just sex . . . I can't really think of one offhand.*

MIKE: It sort of escapes me, too, which is another example of how we've been thoroughly indoctrinated as to *what* to expect.

DARREL: *I suppose the Russian girl that's sent to seduce him in FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE is sort of an exception, because she's not entirely convinced about what she's doing to begin with. But that's hard to say.*

MIKE: Right. In that one she was doing a job that she was told to do or die, believed that she was working for Mother



— with no control of their emotions."

Russia, and then when it became evident that she was being manipulated by an outside force, she *became* independent. That sort of raises a question in my mind as to why she didn't choose to go back to Russia, but presumably things would be nasty enough over there to preclude that possibility. But let me continue on the subject of the women involved in *my* stories. One of the central characters is a daughter of James Bond's old friend Kerim Bey from the book and the movie FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE.

DARREL: *I'm getting some static on the line, that was Kerim Bey?*

MIKE: Yes. Kerim's daughter, her name is Botanee Bey. *(Laughter)* I'm having fun, of course, with a lot of the names, just the way that **Fleming** did. I've been trying to come up with suitable, flamboyant names for the characters, so I have Botanee Bey, and in the third book you will meet a lady hunting guide in northern Idaho by the name of Mary Chase. *(Laughter)*

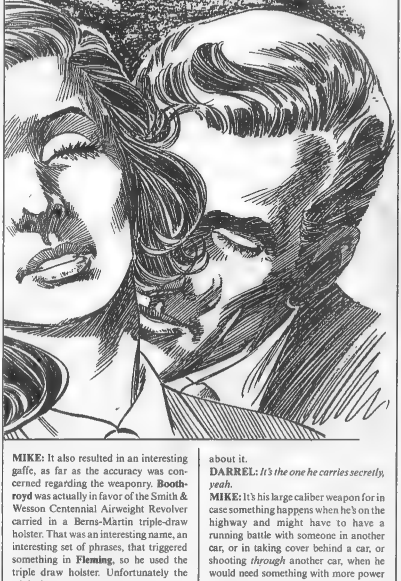
DARREL: *Name fits the profession.*

MIKE: Right. I know the names are weird, but hey, **Fleming** did it, I can do it. And as a little bit of an inside — I haven't told anyone this up to this point — but contractually I am prohibited from using certain elements of the James Bond novels and films. For instance the character of Q has been predominantly developed in the films, although he was mentioned in the James Bond novels, but not as Q. He was referred to simply as Major Boothroyd or the Armourer, head of Q Branch. So you won't be seeing **Desmond Llewelyn** drifting in and out of the shot here at all.

DARREL: *He's one of my favorite things about the movies, though.*

MIKE: Well, the character of Boothroyd is very much intact, but not as you've seen him in the films. It's taken, in truth, from the real life **Geoffrey Boothroyd**, who was **Ian Fleming's** weapons advisor. In the early books **Fleming** had Bond armed with a .25 Beretta. **Geoffrey Boothroyd** happens to have written a book which is considered *the* definitive volume on handguns, called THE PISTOL, and he was rather annoyed and aghast that the author of what he considered his favorite or the best spy fiction he'd seen up to that point could make such an out and out blunder as to underarm his character. So he corresponded with **Fleming** and made a *number* of suggestions as to possible alternate weaponry for Bond.

DARREL: *Which resulted in the Walther PPK.*



MIKE: It also resulted in an interesting gaffe, as far as the accuracy was concerned regarding the weaponry. **Boothroyd** was actually in favor of the Smith & Wesson Centennial Airweight Revolver carried in a Berns-Martin triple-draw holster. That was an interesting name, an interesting set of phrases, that triggered something in **Fleming**, so he used the triple draw holster. Unfortunately the triple draw holster can only be used with a revolver, and he used it with the Walther PPK. *(Laughter)* And that has been maintained throughout the series, just like the choice of the Walther PPK has been despite the fact that later technology has developed . . . not necessarily weapons that are *better*, but compact weapons of higher caliber which are a bit more efficient.

DARREL: *Doesn't John Gardner have Bond carrying some sort of Magnum?*

MIKE: He has a Ruger .44 Magnum in his car. That's referred to in the comic as well, just in a passing reference by **Boothroyd**. Bond thinks that no one knows about it.

DARREL: *It's the one he carries secretly, yeah.*

MIKE: It's his large caliber weapon for in case something happens when he's on the highway and might have to have a running battle with someone in another car, or in taking cover behind a car, or shooting *through* another car, when he would need something with more power and penetration than a 9mm or a 7.65mm.

DARREL: *So . . . you can't use Q but you do have Major Boothroyd. Is there anything else you can't use from the books or the films?*

MIKE: Well, among the other things I've been prohibited from using is any reference whatsoever to Ernst Stavro Blofeld or SPECTRE.

DARREL: *You can't* use SPECTRE?

MIKE: I can't use SPECTRE.

DARREL: *Why not?*

MIKE: Because the characters and the organization have become, I presume through use, so thoroughly related to the

"One of the central characters is a daughter of James

movies and locked up in the continuity of the films that, I'm sure, Cubby Broccoli has a rather firmly staked claim on their usage.

DARREL: *I could see that, yeah.*

MIKE: So, in terms of what I'm able to do, I *can* use other characters from the books with no problem at all, as long as they haven't been killed off. It would be possible to have one of the characters return, even one of Bond's old love interests. *However,* not to be undone, if you get out a Hungarian Czech dictionary and look up the word *wdziadlo* you will find that it translates to phantom or spectre. *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *So you got it in there anyway.*

MIKE: Just a little one for me. It also relates to the character, it has something to say about the character, and after you've seen the third issue you'll probably understand it much more clearly.

DARREL: *Well, the next item on the list is James Bond himself. There are a variety of things in the character, he's a gambler —*

MIKE: He's a gambler, he's a drinker, he's a smoker, and he uses drugs. It's not that he's addictive or anything like that, but he does use Benzedrine.

DARREL: *To keep himself awake, more or less.*

MIKE: Right. This is something that I haven't touched on, but it is a universal concept well established in the books.

DARREL: *But you are not going to be having that in your stories.*

MIKE: I haven't done it *yet*, but that doesn't mean that I *won't* at some point.

DARREL: *But you will have Bond still smoking?*

MIKE: Yes, he will still be smoking, the custom made cigarettes with the three gold bands.

DARREL: *And drinking heavily?*

MIKE: Bond I would regard as a moderately serious drinker. Anyone who sits down and has dinner and sets as his consumption level four ounces of brandy as well a a bottle of wine is a fairly serious drinker. He also is obviously accustomed to that level of alcohol consumption and is capable of handling it, because Bond is very much the sort of person who would *not* allow himself to get out of control.

DARREL: *He must have the constitution for it.*

MIKE: Obviously.

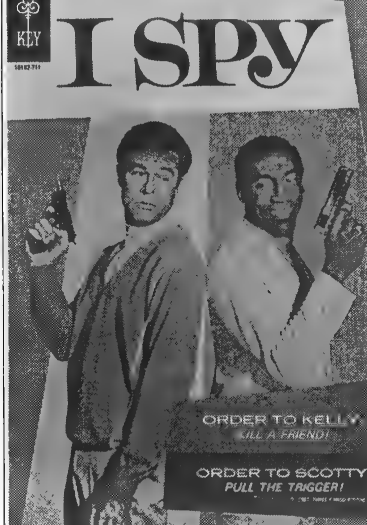
DARREL: *All of this is more or less in the line of Bond being an excessive type of person.*

MIKE: It also . . . in some cases he is not excessive but *obsessive*. Bond is a very strictly regimented personality, his personal and private life are probably about as dull as that of your average accountant bookkeeper. His average office duties are bookwork. His home life is very very strictly regimented, he has the same breakfast every day. He prefers the same type of clothing that he has worn for years. He's found what works for him and he sticks with it. He's obsessive about his rose garden. Everything has to be neat and trim and *exactly* right. When he's out for dinner, dinner had better be *exactly* right, because he takes great enjoyment in the meal itself, but not if it's improperly served or improperly prepared. He is the kind of guy who will go into a bar and *tell* a bartender *how* to make a drink. He doesn't say, "Give me a vodka martini," he goes so far as to tell the bartender *exactly* how to make that *specific* vodka martini, how much of what kind of gin and everything else to put it in. So as far as that goes, his ordinary life is very *strictly* regimented.

DARREL: *Which is almost a fantasy character in a sense. It's hard to imagine too many people being able to regiment themselves that strictly.*

MIKE: Right, but there is a reason for that, and that is that the *rest* of his life is so chaotic. He has a very strictly regimented, rather staid, dull life, broken by

More spies made the move to comics (Gold Key), here, I SPY (circa 1966-68) . . .



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Bond's old friend Kerim Bey from FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE."

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periods of sheer insanity, desperation, life and death struggle. So it was stated that he *requires* this just in order to keep himself balanced, in order to keep himself sane; to know that no matter where he is in the world or what he's doing, when he goes back home Miss May is going to have the traditional breakfast for him, the roses will be neatly trimmed and planted, everything will be exactly as he left it

DARREL: *Well, as well as being a gambler and all that, he's also into sport and martial arts.*

MIKE: To a certain extent, yes. Bond, of course, has been an avid skier, he was born in Switzerland, and —

DARREL: *He was? I don't recall reading that anywhere.*

MIKE: I can check it for you if you like. He's very athletic, very well skilled in *most* sports. I think he would probably find tennis a crashing bore. He'd probably be able to *play* it, because it would occasionally be necessary or a valuable skill to have, but his real passion is golf. The interesting thing about all of this is that it relates back to something that I believe Agatha Christie said, and I'm going to give her credit — if somebody knows the real author of this statement, I'd appreciate learning about it — the quote is, "When you read a book you get 10 percent plot, 20 percent characterization, and 70 percent whatever the author knows best." And Bond's interests and activities 1 believe are a fairly decent reflection on Fleming's personal interests.

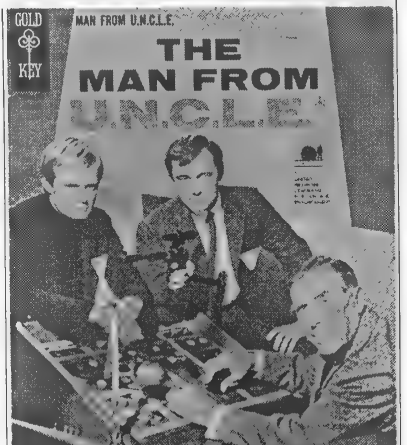
DARREL: *I think everybody that writes about Bond or Fleming comments on that, that James Bond is basically Ian Fleming as he wished he might be.*

MIKE: That's very typical of any author, really. I think it takes a rather exceptional person to step back and write a character, a leading protagonist, that this person really genuinely does not like. Of course then you have the exception to the rule, as in the case of Sherlock Holmes. Doyle despised Holmes, in fact that's why he killed him off, and it was only because of the public clamor that he was forced to bring him back, rather reluctantly.

DARREL: *But with James Bond and Ian Fleming, he was essentially writing himself as he saw himself, and that's also a hard thing to do, write a character that's that personal. It's kind of like giving yourself away in chunks and pieces.*

MIKE: I believe that unless a person is really *exceptionally* gifted, it's very hard not to *shade* a character with elements of your own personality. I just don't think it's very commonly done at all. There are elements and aspects that you can do — I mean it's *possible* to create a character and write a story about someone that you genuinely don't like, but *somewhere* in that story your own particular view *will* come out more often than not, you'll make some sort of statement regarding how you feel about that person.

For instance, I wrote a comic-book series about a guy who had been a blood and guts mercenary, Jon Sable. Now, that doesn't mean that I support the idea of killers for hire or mercenaries or anything like that, I simply find the genre intriguing, and the background interesting and stimulating for creating other stories. Having been through a small portion of one war, I don't like war at all! However, war as a backdrop for human drama is *extremely* interesting. There are very few things in this world as interesting as being shot at!


GOLD KEY
MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.
THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.
A modern version of an ancient trick opens U.N.C.L.E.'s gates to TROUBLE in
THE TROJAN HORSE AFFAIR!

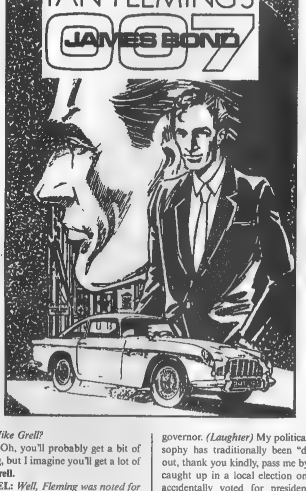
. . . and then came THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. (United Network Command for Law Enforcement).

DARREL: *Fortunately, I haven't had that experience, so I'll take your word for it.*

MIKE: I will tell you for a *fact* that it is plain exciting. If *that* won't get your adrenaline going, you're probably dead. This doesn't mean that it's going to be a new exhibit at Disney World. Six Flags Over Texas — Texas is possible. *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *What I was leading to here was that in Fleming's books you get a lot of Fleming. In Mike Grell's James Bond are we going to get a lot of Fleming or a*

"He (Bond) has a very strictly regimented, rather staid, dull



lot of Mike Grell?

MIKE: Oh, you'll probably get a bit of **Fleming**, but I imagine you'll get a lot of **Mike Grell.**

DARREL: *Well, Fleming was noted for being very cynical, there's a certain degree of cynicism in James Bond — is Mike Grell a cynic?*

MIKE: Oh, to a certain extent, sometimes a bit of a rabble-rouser, a devil's advocate. I stopped believing in Santa Claus a long time ago, not because I *wanted* to but because it just wasn't practical anymore. Deep down inside I still want to believe in Santa Claus. I'm relatively apolitical. I once incurred the wrath of an entire branch of in-laws by turning down the opportunity to work on a gubernatorial campaign, with the comment that it would depend on how much time I had and how much money they were willing to pay. When the gentleman who was speaking to me asked if I wouldn't be willing to donate my time for a good cause, I said, "Look, the only thing I hate worse than *politics* is politicians." And it turned out to be my ex-wife's uncle who was running for governor. *(Laughter)* My political philosophy has traditionally been "deal me out, thank you kindly, pass me by." I got caught up in a local election once and accidentally voted for president, and look what happened for eight years. *(Laughter)* I don't particularly care for politics, but of course by the nature of my work I had to keep track over the course of the last few years, and it's all very interesting but I would be just as happy living out in the boonies someplace where they couldn't get at me.

DARREL: *Well, I think we've come to the last item on the list now, sex and violence, which is almost a given when you get into a James Bond story, that you're going to get some of both —*

MIKE: Not necessarily together, but I'm all in favor of it. *(Laughter)* Yeah, there will be a suitable amount of gratuitous sex, and certainly a suitable amount of gratuitous violence, as befits any James Bond story. James Bond will not be celibate, James Bond will not be monogamous, because it simply does not fit with the traditional character. In the real world of espionage if you're sent out on a mission and your boss says your assignment is to contact and gain the confidence of a person, wherever and whomever, and in order to do that it's necessary to become their lover, you do it. That is just the nature of the job.

Bond is not cold and dispassionate by any means. He's *capable* of extreme violence, but he has a reaction to it. One of the things that I really liked was the scene in the movie DR. NO where **Sean Connery** is in bed and there's a tarantula crawling up under the covers. You see him lying there, forcing himself to remain still while this huge hairy spider crawls up and over his face and then off onto the pillow — he's sweating, but he's holding still. And as soon as the thing gets off, he does what *I* would do, he got a shoe and hit it — let's see — I think he hit it five times and then he hit it twice more. And then he went in the bathroom and threw up. Now *that's* my kind of guy! That's *exactly* what I would do, except I would probably throw up first, *on* the spider, to slow him down, and *then* get the shoe and hit him five times! *(Laughter)*

The other thing is that when I deal with Bond in action situations, he's very cool under pressure, under fire. It's later on that you see that there is something there, with the burning need for a cigarette, or a hand shaking ever so slightly. It's not just an adrenaline *rush*, it's that "you damn near got killed here" realization afterwards.

DARREL: *And Fleming did that somewhat as well. He was very manipulative in what he wrote. I can recall reading a scene and getting into it and not realizing how I was being set up for the next scene, maybe something slightly amusing would happen and that would buoy my spirits up a little, and then the next scene would be something just totally horrendous, like the spider in the bed.*

MIKE: Right.

DARREL: *Oh, I think I've figured out how you could, if you wanted to, explain Bond's effect on women — although you'd have to go to way out science fiction time.*

MIKE: And that is?

DARREL: *It's his mutant power.*

MIKE: Ah! *(Laughter)* That's it, that's it — secret agent XX?! *(Laughter)* X-Bond? Nah, I guess not.

DARREL: *Anyway, if we can back up a little here, I have my own little theory as to why Fleming created the Bond girl stereotype —*

MIKE: Which is?

DARREL: *Well, this is your interview so I would like to hear what you might have*

life, broken by periods of sheer insanity, desperation, etc."

to say about that first.

MIKE: Well, my understanding is that *Fleming* himself was actually a bit of a male chauvinist pig, and was possibly a bit uncomfortable in the company of women — I wouldn't say necessarily misogynistic, but it could be that way. And his development of the female characters was designed more to enhance his male lead rather than to create a fully three-dimensional female character that would be anything more than glamor trimming. His approach to women in the books seems to have leaned very strongly to women who were **capable** in many ways, but also they had that ultimate vulnerable susceptibilty to male charms — and if you look at the recent goings on in the spy community in our own country then you discover that it's usually the other way around. *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *Well, that more or less fits in with what I had thought, though I start from a slightly different premise. First, we have to realize that Fleming was mainly writing escapist literature.*

MIKE: Oh, by all means.

DARREL: *And then recognize that, you know, these stories are wildly outrageous and pretty unbelievable.*

MIKE: Just slightly, though. **Fleming's** books were drawn sufficiently from his experiences in the British intelligence community that they had a *certain* ring of reality despite the fact that they were, as you say, escapist entertainment. I don't think he set out to write great literature or change the world in any way shape or form, his primary goal was simply to entertain.

DARREL: *And as you pointed out, the women serve the Bond character, because they prove that he was capable with women.*

MIKE: Absolutely. I think part of the *design* behind James Bond has been to make Bond the kind of character that women would want to be with, and men would want to be.

DARREL: *Draw in as many readers as you can. The one thing that struck me, though, was . . . Fleming kind of tied the books down to reality with his attention to detail, and because of that attention to detail there was really no way he could write a sex scene.*

MIKE: *(Pause)* Well, going back to what **Agatha Christie** said, that when you read a book you get 10 percent plot, 20 percent characterization, and 70 percent whatever the writer knows best, and that may have been fully in force with **Fleming**. It may possibly have been that he was writing what he knew best and stayed away from what he didn't do.

The other thing that you have to bear in mind, though, is the times, the morals that he was dealing with. If you take the sequences that he had with Bond and Tracy in ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE, there was a great deal of romance and tenderness there, and desperation and urgency, certainly. But it was a very touching story written, of course, from the standpoint of a man who finally finds the right woman for him, gives up what had been his entire life *for* her, and then loses her. The general approach to sex scenes in novels at the time that **Fleming** began writing them was actually quite prudish. **Mickey Spillane** was banned in something like seven cities in the United States for writing a very simple phrase. He took the character up to a point where the lady was beginning to disrobe, and Mike Hammer takes her in his arms, and the following line was what got him banned — he wrote, "She was a woman."

DARREL: *That's kind of hard to understand, why that would cause it to be banned.*

MIKE: Right. And the first James Bond book was written at about the same time as the first Mike Hammer book was.

DARREL: *Well, I understand you're also doing an adaptation of LICENSE TO KILL or LICENSE REVOKED or whatever the new movie will be called.*

MIKE: Yes. It was originally titled LICENSE REVOKED, it *has* been changed to LICENSE TO KILL, at least on the one-sheets and in the information that we have here. However, I looked at the one-sheet and I wouldn't be surprised at all if when the film is actually released they don't release another one-sheet with a big red "REVOKED" stamped over the words "LICENSE TO KILL." They have plenty of room for it. It may just be a ploy, but the word that I got was that first **John Gardner** had objected on the

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Cover to The Illustrated JAMES BOND, 007 (art: Tom Sciacca & Rich Buckler).

Photo: L C Wagnerian II

"I had heard that Wayne Newton might be cast as the villain."

grounds that it was too close to LICENSE RENEWED, which was his title —

DARREL: *The first James Bond book he wrote.*

MIKE: Right. And also we heard that the choice had been made purely because the word "REVOKED" didn't translate well into other languages.

DARREL: *What can you tell us about the movie? Other than Timothy Dalton, I have no idea who is in it.*

MIKE: I can't tell you a *damn* thing about the movie. I believe . . . I have no idea who's in it except that I had heard that *Wayne Newton* might be cast as the villain. I believe the story has to do with Bond going after a drug czar in Central America, who is *also* a bit of a **Jim Jones** type evangelist. I'm sitting here going through the stills, and at this point I still haven't found a picture of **Wayne Newton.** *(Laughter)* So there is a distinct possibility that he *won't* be in the movie, although you never can tell. It was the word that I had gotten, that he played a sort of a **Jim Jones** type, but maybe not.

DARREL: *I think I remember hearing something along those lines some time ago on ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT or something, but just as a rumored casting possibility.*

MIKE: If I find out more I'll sure let you know. Nope, that's not him, neither is that — there's pretty much everybody *else* in the world. *(Laughter)* But so far no **Wayne Newton.** Too bad.

DARREL: *Yeah, he would make an interesting Bond villain.*

MIKE: He may be here and I'm just overlooking him, but I haven't seen him yet.

DARREL: *I take it that you haven't gotten very much material from the movie yet.*

MIKE: In point of fact I have the breakdowns from the script in my possession, I simply have not had the opportunity to read through them to find out exactly what in the world this story is about. There is very little point in my doing it at this stage, since there has been *another* rewrite since I received this, and it could involve changing the end, it could involve changing the middle, it could involve eliminating characters, or whatever. So until I have a final version of the script in hand, there's no point in wasting my time reading it.

DARREL: *But that's something you will be working on for the summer, or whenever the movie's released.*

MIKE: That's right. My studio, Creative Fire Studio, is beginning to package work for publishers, and this will be the first effort. Essentially, all I am doing is putting together talent to produce a good package that will be supervised in the production by myself. In this case the

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COMICS INTERVIEW

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"I've been an avid archer since I was a kid, more or less."

film adaptation, the initial breakdown of the script is being done by **Richard Ashford,** who is the publisher of Acme Press and has direct access to the shooting script and the stills necessary and everything else over in London, through the offices of Glidrose. And both **Cat Yronwode** and myself will be working on it as editors, Cat predominantly — it's her job to correct the spelling, it's my job to correct the storytelling.

And I'll be doing the breakdowns, more or less thumbnail breakdowns, and selecting the stills that will be used to illustrate the book. Then it will be passed on to **Chuck Austen,** who does . . . oh, lord, what's he working on right now? I think he's currently inking THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS, but he's also the creator of HERO SANDWICH. Chuck will be working from the stills and my breakdowns to do . . . I suppose you could call it a layout, a finished layout — not fully rendered but enough to work from for the finish, which will be done by **Tom Yeates.** And *then* as colorist we have **Michael Davis,** who is extremely extremely talented.

DARREL: *Sounds like this is going to be a nice package. Is this going to be in the same format as JAMES BOND 007, the comic-size squarebound prestige whatever?*

MIKE: I am not entirely certain of that. It may be 8½ by 11, it may be the upsize, this is all stuff that needs to be finalized yet. I'm sure that it will be squarebound, cardboard cover with a wrap of some sort. As to the cover, at this moment we're uncertain whether or not we'll have access to the one-sheet or will be able to repeat the image from the one-sheet or anything like that, or whether it will be photographic or *possibly* a painting based on a combination of the one-sheet and photographs.

DARREL: *Well, I'm looking forward to seeing it.*

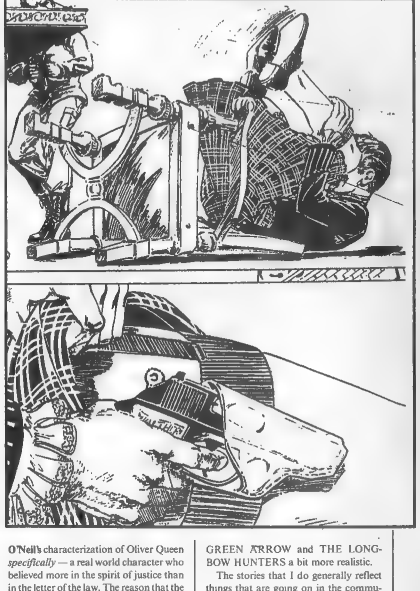
MIKE: Me, too. *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *Well, we've established that Ian Fleming put a lot of himself into James Bond.*

MIKE: Right.

DARREL: *How much of Mike Grell goes into Oliver Queen?*

MIKE: *(Laughs)* Well, let's see, you can put **Mike Grell** into Oliver Queen about one and a half times, you have to kind of stretch me out and make me taller. *(Laughter)* Oliver Queen is a combination of things for me, represents the influence that I had in the early days when I first decided to get into this general line of work. I was quite taken with **Denny**



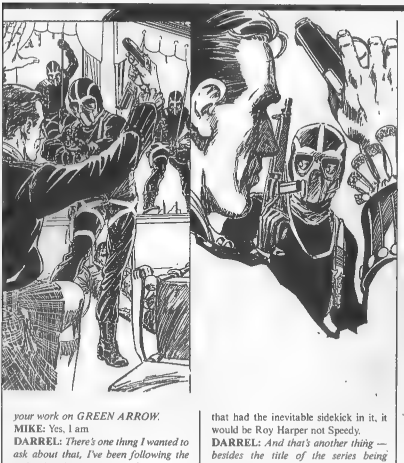
O'Neil's characterization of Oliver Queen *specifically* — a real world character who believed more in the spirit of justice than in the letter of the law. The reason that the character struck that chord in me is that that's pretty much my philosophy as well.

It's probably that identification. I had a beard when I was doing THE WARLORD and somebody said, "Oh, the Warlord has got a beard because Oliver Queen has got a beard." I said, "No, the Warlord has a beard because *I* have a beard, and *I* have a beard because Oliver Queen has a beard!" *(Laughter)* I've been an avid archer since I was a kid, more or less, with certain gaps in that period, about equal to my gaps in association with comic books. I didn't get interested in archery *because* of comic books, but it was a carry-over, and I've been able to use my skills and interests to make GREEN ARROW and THE LONGBOW HUNTERS a bit more realistic.

The stories that I do generally reflect things that are going on in the community that I live in. I take a lot of my subject matter from the headlines and news flashes at eleven, and simply extrapolate them for dramatic purposes. It's not necessary for me to feel *personally* involved in the story in order for me to be able to write one, but if I find the subject matter interesting or compelling then I certainly will attack it. I relatively rarely get up on a soapbox and try to preach, I don't have any answers — but I've got a ton of questions. And sometimes the best thing you can do to people is to get them to ask a question of themselves, or acknowledge that the question exists and try to find the answer for themselves.

DARREL: *And so you're continuing*

"I once incurred the wrath of an entire branch of in-laws by turning



your work on GREEN ARROW.

MIKE: Yes, I am

DARREL: *There's one thing I wanted to ask about that, I've been following the series since its inception, and —*

MIKE: No, I'm *not* bringing back the trick arrows! *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *No, no. It's just that you seem to have taken a scalpel and cut the series pretty much almost entirely away from the rest of the DC Universe and everything else that goes on in it.*

MIKE: I have certainly tried.

DARREL: *Will you be tying it in more closely or trying to continue this trend of keeping the book separate?*

MIKE: It depends, really on how you want to look at it. There will be elements showing up during the course of the next few issues that will make some people think, "Oh, yes, he's trying to tie this in to the rest of the DC Universe." But in reality I am *not*. Case in point, Hal Jordan will be appearing in a couple of issues — I believe issues #19 and #20 — but that's not as Green Lantern.

DARREL: *Not as Green Lantern?*

MIKE: No — hell, no. I mean the man wears a funny costume and has a ring that makes him fly around! It's super powers, I'm not interested in doing super powers. He appears as Hal Jordan, just the way that if I were going to do a book that had the inevitable sidekick in it, it would be Roy Harper not Speedy.

DARREL: *And that's another thing — besides the title of the series being GREEN ARROW, I don't believe I've ever seen one reference to Oliver Queen as Green Arrow in the whole series.*

MIKE: The name Green Arrow appeared in two panels in THE LONGBOW HUNTERS and has never been used since, because it's a stupid name.

DARREL: *And I love that running gag you have about the secret identity — "It was supposed to be a secret?"*

MIKE: "I wish people would stop *saying* that!" *(Laughter)* That had an interesting impact, as well. There have been a lot of people who have said, "Put the mask back on." But that's a little silly. It's not exactly as if he were **Clayton Moore**, so I don't think we have a problem there. The other thing is that in issue #25 there is a character who appears very briefly at the end of the book, which is John Constantine. Again, not because I'm trying to tie in with the rest of the DC Universe — that's simple marketing strategy, really. *(Laughter)* They have created a series — I don't know if it's been announced or what — but it involves a crossover between all of the so-called adult titles in the DC line, with John Constantine being the central revolving figure. They asked me if I could possibly see my way clear to write a story that included him in *some* fashion, and as it turned out I had a story in mind where I could *include* the character of John Constantine without jeopardizing the authenticity or the believability of the characters that I have been dealing with. It takes place in England, Ollie is over visiting Sherwood Forest.

DARREL: *Well, I really like the series. It's kind of rare to have DC or Marvel or even some of the independents these days put out a series that maintains its integrity to that degree.*

MIKE: I have been adamant about that. When I took over the series that was one of the stipulations that I made, was that I would not be bound to incorporate Oliver Queen into the rest of the DC Universe, and that I would not be bound by anyone's continuity. So if the character were to appear in another book, I have the right and freedom to ignore whatever happens and proceed according to my own storyline. It's a lot like dealing with Dinah Lance as a character. Dinah is an integral part of Ollie's life, the two are really inseparable for that reason, but she's featured as Dinah Lance. Now, fighting *crime* is an integral part of *her* life, so that's incorporated in her character, but I don't show her dressing up in costume and going out on the streets and using super powers or anything like that, because that's an element that I don't wish to deal with. Now that **Sharon Wright** has taken the character of Dinah and brought her back down to a bit more of reality, in terms of the continuity that's been going on in the *rest* of the DC features, there's a stronger possibility that I will use her in a crimefighting capacity in some of the later books. There was something else I should tell you . . . oh, yeah, we're doing a four-issue series that I'm writing and **Dan Jurgens** is illustrating, beginning with issue #21 — and I believe the intent is to release it bi-weekly over the summer.

DARREL: *Ooo — and this is mini-series within the series time.*

MIKE: Right. It's called BLOOD OF THE DRAGON, and it features the return of Shado.

DARREL: *This is sounding more and more interesting.*

MIKE: M-hm.

DARREL: *We're getting close to the end of the tape, unfortunately.*

MIKE: That's okay; I'm not going to tell you too much about it anyway. *(Laughter)* Except that in the very beginning of the book, when you see Shado she's got a

down the opportunity to work on a gubernatorial campaign."

baby.

DARREL: (Pause) *Any idea who the father might be?*

MIKE: I know *exactly* who the father is, but you're going to have to read the book! *(Laughter)*

DARREL: *Well, to continue in the archery vein, I've heard that you've illustrated Howard Pyle's ROBIN HOOD for Starblaze/ Donning.*

MIKE: Yes, I did.

DARREL: *Is that going to be coming out soon?*

MIKE: I believe it's going to be out in March or sometime around then. The artwork was finished in June and the book was supposed to be released in September or November or something like that, and then they decided to take it off the schedule and came back and asked me if I would be willing to do more illustrations for it. They wanted a few basic pieces, mostly design pieces, which was no problem in black and white — but they also wanted two more color paintings. And I told them that considering the arrangement that we had, I had gone about as far as I could in terms of time investment unless there was a certain amount of cash that would change hands as well. So we settled for an increase in the royalty, a *minor* increase, and did away with the additional color pieces. So, I have completed all of that work and there will now be more illustrations in the book, more black-and-white illustrations.

DARREL: *How many illustrations does the book end up with?*

MIKE: Ultimately? I began with fifteen black-and-whites and seven full-color paintings, then I created a design that serves as both the embossed cover stamping for the limited edition book, a slightly modified version serves as the frontispiece in *all* editions, and a further modified version serves as endpiece. I also created a design that is used as the endpapers on the limited edition books, it's simply a design to fill in the inside of the front and back cover and the facing page — and that design is repeated as the chapter headings, with numerals inserted

"I believe First Comics is planning to do a SABLE graphic novel."

DARREL: *I think that takes care of everything of immediate concern, so we can talk a little about what you might be doing in the future. There are rumors that you might do a WARLORD graphic novel at DC or a JON SABLE graphic novel at First. Any truth in that?*

MIKE: I believe First Comics is planning to do a SABLE graphic novel, five years after I put the bug in their ear to do it. I struggled for over two years to persuade **Rick Obadiah** that it was a good idea, and they turned me down every step of the way. So no, I don't think I will be doing a SABLE graphic novel for First Comics. As for the WARLORD graphic novel, I *will* eventually do a WARLORD graphic novel. That's something that I discussed with DC quite some time ago, before the cancellation of the series . . . when I knew that it was going to be cancelled. I intend to write it and pencil it. **Dick Giordano** is going to ink it. But it's not on schedule, I doubt you'll see it for another two years at least.

DARREL: *Any other projects in the plans?*

MIKE: Let's see. The only other project that I have pending at the moment is another series for DC that I'm going to do, it's called SWAMP ANGEL. And it has nothing to do with a shambling mockery of a man with *crusty moss* growing all over his body. It's historically based . . . sort of, what would you call it, faction?

DARREL: *Faction, factual fiction?*

MIKE: Right. It has nothing to do with anything that you've seen in comic books before, it's not related to action, adventure, heroism or anything like that. That one is not on the schedule yet, but I expect that it will probably be turning up somewhere near the end of the year. And in addition to that I will be writing and developing at least one other prestige series with DC, and I have another one in the works that I will be writing and someone else will be illustrating.

DARREL: *Any more James Bond in your future after you get done with this three-issue series?*

MIKE: Absolutely. What we intend to do is to go off-stand for nine months to a year, after the first three, and then come back with three more, and then off-stand, and then back with three more. In the meantime, during the period that BOND is off-stand, I'll be working on other projects.

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Comics Interview

"We're probably the largest comic

ANTHEA SHACKLETON

publisher, at least in France."

Art © respective Pellos, Reiser, Marijac, Fred, Moebius, Gillon, Bretecher, Forest, Mezieres, Tardi, Lob and Bilal

"security reasons," the normal chaos of traffic reduced to a maniacal, insane havoc. We raced around the Arc De Triomphe trying desperately to defeat an incomprehensible snarl, a driver's worst nightmare, but fortune was with us for we had a Parisienne cabby — we crossed over the Seine to arrive safe, if not sound, at Dargaud.

Situated in Neuilly, on the sprawling outskirts of the Can-Can City, Dargaud is a mammoth among publishers, representing such famous comics creators as, to name but a few, Goscinny, Mezieres, Bilal, Moebius/Giraud, and Tardi. But we had not come on some tourist whim to bask in the greatness of those who had been where we now stood; our adventurous gambol through those treacherous streets had been with a purpose, we were to meet with Dargaud's manager of foreign rights, Anthea Shackleton. Our only fear had been of a language barrier, but this soon proved unfounded — Anthea is English. Fluent in the French language and culture, she offered a most informative and enlightening insight into the Gaullic comic-book scene ...

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT: *To start, Dargaud went into the States about four years ago?*

ANTHEA SHACKLETON: I can't remember the exact date, I can find it somewhere; but yes, it was about four years ago.

DAK: *And you were publishing your own material and distributing through ...*

ANTHEA: We tried distributing through various different means, it was very difficult to get onto a broad distribution basis. It was mainly speciality, and for things like ASTERIX it just isn't enough.

DAK: *You were in the direct sales market, as they call it?*

ANTHEA: To be *quite* honest I wasn't in the States so I don't know *exactly* how they were doing it. They were doing it through some kind of centralized agency that went out to different places, but I don't exactly know how it was functioning.

DAK: *I think in the States what we're curious about, because Dargaud is so successful here, is why it was not so successful there.*

ANTHEA: I think there are a lot of reasons. First, in France and in certain countries in Europe cartoons are completely accepted, it's an artform which stands *completely* on its own. **Bilal,** for example, one of his albums was voted one of the 20 best *books* of the year, in competi-

A booklet of postage stamps issued last year. From top to bottom: Pellos, Reiser, Marijac, Fred, Moebius, Gillon, Bretecher, Forest, Mezieres, Tardi, Lob and Bilal.

SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT?

Many questions have been raised recently about the direction the comic book industry appears to be taking. Would you help answer some of these questions? (For more complete answers, please use a separate sheet of paper.)

1. How long have you been a comic book fan? _____
2. How much money per month do you spend on comic books? _____
3. How many hours a week do you spend reading comics? _____
4. Do you feel a comic book rating system is necessary and if so, why? _____
5. Do you feel publishers are giving you what you want, or making you want what they give? _____
6. How do you feel about the current trend in comics toward more explicit:
   - A) Sexual situations and nudity _____
   - B) Profanity _____
   - C) Violence _____
   - D) Occult / Satanic / New age activities _____
   - E) Attacks on political and religious figures _____
   - F) Homosexual representations _____
   - G) Tones of aggression, rebellion and death _____
   - H) Negative attitudes towards religion _____
   - I) Positive or negative reference to current issues such as mercy killing, abortion, drugs, divorce, child abuse and any others you care to respond to _____
7. Do you feel comic books should use more or less of the elements listed above? _____
8. Do you feel comic books should be used by creators as a forum to express their personal political, social and religious views? _____
9. What do you define as immoral? _____
10. In promoting their books, do you feel publishers have leaned too far toward sensationalism and bad taste? _____
11. Do you feel that comic books, long regarded as a children's medium, should be limited to presenting subjects suitable to all ages of readership? _____
12. Do you feel that an interesting, mature, quality comic book can be successful without the use of any extreme violence, sex, nudity or profanity? _____
13. Do you feel that the growing amount of violence, sex and profanity in comics is simply a reflection of a growing decay in America's morality? _____
14. Do you feel that presenting in comics the "real life" concepts of situations, profanity and homosexuality are beneficial and educational to the children and adults who are reading them? _____
15. What religious belief do you profess, if any? _____
16. Do you feel that many of the industry's professionals add gratuitous violence, sex and profanity to their comics so that their product may be considered "adult" or "mature?" _____

Please feel free to give your comments for or against any of the subjects listed in this questionnaire. Industry professionals and publishers are encouraged to respond.

(In signing this questionnaire, you are authorizing the recipient to make public your name and all of the information you have supplied.)

Thank you very much for you cooperation.

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PASS IT AROUND!

"Comics here are not really for children."

tion with literature in general.

DAK: *Not in a separate category.*

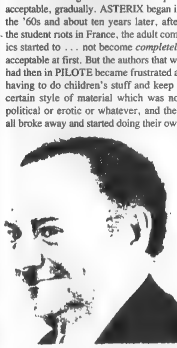
ANTHEA: No, in just a general category. I think he's even had two voted in the 20 best books of the year. And people are willing to pay; some of our books cost 60 francs, which is $12, something like that, in hardback. The format is different, it's not an American format, it's a completely French format in fact — it has problems in England, too. The quality of the whole thing, the paper, printing, the colors, some of the artwork — I'm not saying there aren't *bad* comics in France at all — but it's just not something that's accepted in the Anglo-Saxon market where comics are mentally debilitic. *(Laughter.)* I think the whole *concept* is completely different. In England and in the States you read it and you throw it away, unless you're a fanatic and you collect them. But *now*, since about 15 or 20 years ago, comics here are considered a completely valid art and literature. It's not in the States.

DAK: *Yeah, but I think that's changing.*

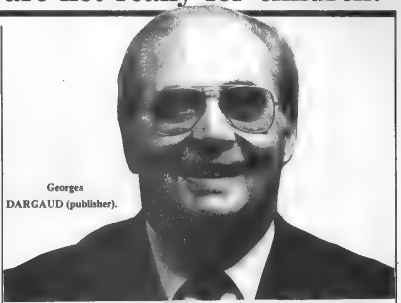
ANTHEA: I hope so. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *You say here for maybe 20 years comics have been considered legitimate, why do you think it changed?*

ANTHEA: It was ASTERIX, TINTIN and then ASTERIX, which really made comics completely acceptable. ASTERIX is the main thing that made people here realize that you could actually read a comic on the Underground and it was quite acceptable, gradually. ASTERIX began in the '60s and about ten years later, after the student riots in France, the adult comics started to . . . not become *completely* acceptable at first. But the authors that we had then in PILOTE became frustrated at having to do children's stuff and keep a certain style of material which was not political or erotic or whatever, and they all broke away and started doing their own



Asterix's author GOSCINNY.



Georges DARGAUD (publisher).

thing. Then, in the beginning of the '70s, gradually this style of comic started to become completely acceptable. **Bilal** came out of this movement, most of the authors that you have today.

DAK: *And what do you do for Dargaud?*

ANTHEA: I sell foreign rights.

DAK: *Does Dargaud just* sell *foreign rights, or does Dargaud ever buy foreign rights?*

ANTHEA: We do very occasionally, but because we have so many authors, or who should come *back* under contract with us, it's difficult to fit in our own authors *plus* outside people — and obviously we don't want to lose our good authors by selling outright or turning to the outside. We tend to try and keep to our authors, keep them happy.

DAK: *How many other countries do you license your material to?*

ANTHEA: Well, ASTERIX is probably the one that's licensed to the most countries, about 30 — it changes quite regularly — 30 languages, 30 countries, depends how you look on it. ,

DAK: *And in the U.S. it's now published by —?*

ANTHEA: It's published by us and distributed by Macmillan.

DAK: *We have heard some amazing overall sales figures for the ASTERIX books. What was Dominique Rasquin at the Album shop saying —*

JULIA MATHER: *200,000,000.*

DAK: *Yeah. We asked what were the album sales at the low end and at the high end, and at the high end they mentioned ASTERIX.*

ANTHEA: Yeah. I think the global sales in the French language and in foreign languages are in the region of 200,000,000, something like that.

DAK: *Those are the titles publishers like.* (Laughter.) *But the 200,000,000 was for the whole series?*

ANTHEA: The whole series, yeah, that Dargaud publishes.

DAK: *So that's almost 10,000,000 per title.*

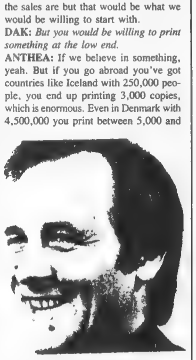
ANTHEA: Yeah.

DAK: *What's the low end of sales?*

ANTHEA: I think the lowest print run we do is 12,000 to 15,000. I can't say what the sales are but that would be what we would be willing to start with.

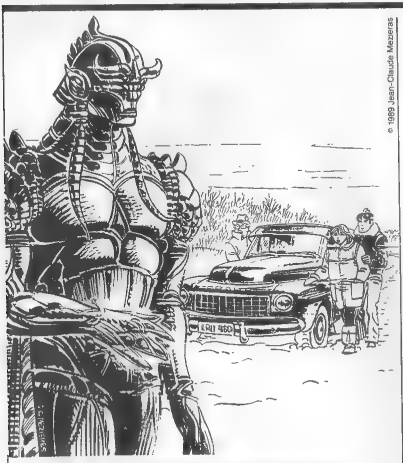
DAK: *But you would be willing to print something at the low end.*

ANTHEA: If we believe in something, yeah. But if you go abroad you've got countries like Iceland with 250,000 people, you end up printing 3,000 copies, which is enormous. Even in Denmark with 4,500,000 you print between 5,000 and



Asterix's artist UDERZO.

"Bilal was voted one of the 20 best books of the



The VALERIAN cover, SUR LES FRONTIERES.

10,000 of a normal title, which is incredible.

DAK: *Yes, that's amazing for that population. Do they gang together to print these and change the plates?*

ANTHEA: Normally in Scandinavia, yes.

JULIA: *How many languages do you speak?*

ANTHEA: Two properly, and German. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *How are you able to deal with people in all of the different languages?*

ANTHEA: In English. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *In Italy we found very few people speaking English*

ANTHEA: Between English and French, you can usually get by with one or the other, but I don't deal with the Latins. In the rest of the world I don't find English to be too much of a problem.

JULIA: *Do you have somebody else handling the Latin countries or do you not sell in them?*

ANTHEA: Yeah, sure, we sell a lot, one of the assistants speaks Spanish.

DAK: *And you basically now have ASTERIX and one other series being published in the United States?*

ANTHEA: VALERIAN, **Jean-Claude Mezieres'** series, the one he sent you, or that somebody sent you. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *And those are the only two?*

ENKI BILAL

ANTHEA: Those are the two that are being published by us and distributed by Macmillan, but there are other series being published in the States by Catalan and NBM.

DAK: *That's the direct sales market primarily, Catalan and NBM, which is a different method of distribution from what ASTERIX has in the United States with Macmillan. Is ASTERIX also sold in the specialty shops?*

ANTHEA: I really don't know — here it's sold everywhere. I don't know exactly what it is in the States, presumably it's the normal kind of Macmillan distribution circuit. I imagine if a specialty shop wants it they can always ask for it and get it, but I don't know.

DAK: *Have you considered, because of the size of Dargaud and so on, making an alliance with another company, like say Marvel, who is of a similar size in the United States?*

ANTHEA: We've considered all *sorts* of different possibilities in the States, none of them have yet been absolutely perfect. For the moment we're staying with Macmillan for ASTERIX and VALERIAN, and we'll be working like we're working in the rest of the world, selling on a royalty basis, like we do with Catalan and NBM, to see for the moment to try to get something started.

DAK: *Then try to build.*

ANTHEA: Yeah.

DAK: *Well, I think American readers are only distantly aware of Dargaud because when you went into the States it was a very low profile attempt, there was not a lot of publicity or awareness in the comic-book marketplace. If you could just describe Dargaud, the company and the type of material and so on.*

ANTHEA: Okay. I think we're probably still the largest comic publisher, at least in France, and it started with magazines in the '40s. When the company bought this magazine called PILOTE, which was carrying an unknown cartoon series called ASTERIX, that became really the basis of the company as it is today — PILOTE is still running, ASTERIX is obviously no longer in it.

DAK: *And you put out quite a lot of material —*

ANTHEA: We have reduced our production in the last couple of years because the market is getting very saturated, there are a lot more comic publishers, and I think *all* of them had to reduce their print runs and eliminate some less sure sellers. A couple of years ago we would have been publishing a minimum of 100 titles a year, now we're publishing around 70 to 80

year, in competition with [illegible] general."

TAAR by Jaime Brocal Remohi.

titles a year.

DAK: *And these are all the hardcover format?*

ANTHEA: Yes.

DAK: *And you still publish PILOTE, any other periodical?*

ANTHEA: We have one other monthly magazine which is in part the same material as PILOTE, which uses a different sales circuit and gives more information in general on the comics scene in France, it's called SPOT. We also publish a gardening magazine which has absolutely *nothing* to do with comics.

DAK: *I was going to ask if Dargaud published outside of comics.*

ANTHEA: Yeah, we have gardening, cooking, horticulture, pig raising —

DAK: *The works.*

ANTHEA: And a certain number of books based on these magazines.

DAK: *That's quite a lot of material. What is the range of material? Is there a type of the many books that you publish here in France each year . . . would you say the books fall into any* particular *category, science fiction or —*

ANTHEA: They fall into a lot of different categories, fantasy, science fiction — I would say probably more fantasy than science fiction — adult adventure, juvenile adventure, and just ordinary police stories, juvenile and adult humor, political satire to a certain extent — it depends on how you look at it, some of this stuff is not satire but it's quite political.

DAK: *Do you think that your competition is the publishers of other albums, not the people who do comic books on the newsstand?*

ANTHEA: Yeah, probably.

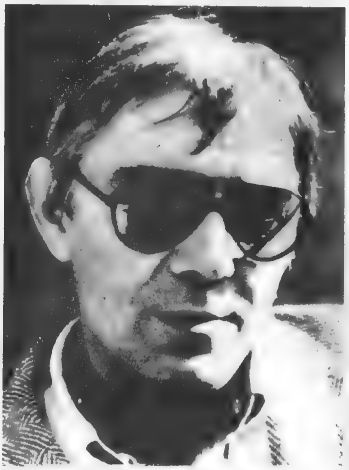
DAK: *Why do you think the comics field here settled? Is it because of all of the other publishers?*

ANTHEA: Well, there's a recession, people don't have as much money to spend on this kind of thing so they're probably buying less anyway, and the choice had become so enormous. There were an awful lot of comic albums to spread among a group of people who have got probably less and less money to spend, so it's a combination of a *lot* of albums and not enough money to buy them, that's my personal view.

DAK: *So, do you think Dargaud is sort of holding firm; it's grown to a certain size and it's stabilized? Is it still growing? Has it reduced a little bit?*

ANTHEA: It has reduced a little bit, obviously, because all French comic-book companies have had problems in the last few years because sales went down.

"The global sales of ASTERIX



MILO MANARA . . .

Hopefully the situation is turning around, sales are stabilizing and will be going up, but I know more about foreign markets than the French market. I think in the main foreign markets that we have, like Denmark, it's been more or less the same situation.

DAK: *Have all these markets had a depression?*

ANTHEA: Yes, to a certain extent. A lot of them have reduced their print runs and cut out certain series, but they're still continuing and it *seems* to be stabilizing.

DAK: *That's very interesting because the market in the States has gone through that, a very severe market correction with falling sales across the board, and you're saying that has happened in practically every country —*

ANTHEA: Well, it's difficult to say in the countries where we don't sell very much, but in countries like Denmark where we sell a terrific lot certainly, and even in countries like Indonesia but probably for a completely different reason — I think that's more internal economics than anything else.

JULIA: *It seems — this has just occurred to me — when a country goes into a depression the first avenue that is restricted is entertainment. Do you think that possibly in the last few years the world has gone into a slight depression and we've just noticed the effect on our markets?*

ANTHEA: I don't know. There are people who will tell you the reverse, that when things are going badly you are going to go and buy things to entertain you. I'm not really sure. I think that *probably* what's going to happen is you're going to say, "Okay, we haven't got any money, instead of buying a book or going to the cinema we'll watch television." A lot of friends who are comics fans have said to me in the last four or five years that they have had to reduce it and just buy the ones they *really* want, not the ones they didn't

. . . and a display of his sensuous skill from TUTTO RICOMINCIO CON UN'ESTATE INDIANA, a collaboration with Hugo Pratt.

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are in the region of 200,000,000."

ASTERIX takes off . . . all over the world.

know and thought they might like.

DAK: *Do you have an idea why the comic-book markets in so many different countries would all have a depression?*

ANTHEA: The countries are suffering from a general depression, not just in publishing; as far as I understand it's not only comic-book publishers who are having problems, it's publishing in general. People are buying less books.

DAK: *It's curious. For a time in the States it was very good, many small publishers sprang up because it was easy to publish and books were selling quite well, and then the next year nobody was there to buy the books. You wonder — where did those people go?*

ANTHEA: Maybe they're going to public libraries, I don't know, or maybe they're rereading the books that they already have

DAK: *We found at Marvel Comics that the books seemed to sell better when inflation was raging, when you would hear a lot of bad economic news and inflation was in double digits. Maybe what we've had the last few years is good times but we didn't know it.* (Laughter.)

ANTHEA: People *do* complain here that comics are very expensive, which by your standards they are, but they're all perfectly expensive to make. It's a very expensive process compared to publishing a print book.

DAK: *Actually, I've looked into it, for your package the price is relatively inexpensive, because when you discount for the retailer and for distribution there's not much left for the publisher. Maybe it's more economical because you do it so much.*

ANTHEA: It's a tradition here, hardcover, for a start — I think France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy probably do much more in hardcover — whereas in Northern Europe it's much more rare, it's a luxury book. Normally in England, Germany and Scandinavia nobody's going to do hardback *except* perhaps a very small print run of collector's editions.

DAK: *Yeah, at a very high price.*

ANTHEA: But here as we can sell them for a higher price in hardcover it's presumably better to do that than to go into a limp cover, which we're not quite sure people are really going to want. They're more fragile, they would have to be very well made to stand the rigors of being kept and reread and reread, so it's just better to have the hardcover.

DAK: *When you reduced the number of titles, what type of material did you reduce? What was lost?*

ANTHEA: New authors, experiments that

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#12
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EN TOUS CAS, C'EST CE QU'AFFIRMENT LES VECTEURS DE ROUVEAU... ALORS,,,
DÉJÀ, LA MAGIE DES BAKTALITES SURPASSE LA NÔTRE...

Moebius' LE MAJOR FATAL.

we would have done before that we just felt we'd better leave aside for the moment. Did we drop any authors? We probably dropped four or five of the authors who were still very uncertain, who have not reached what we would call satisfactory figures.

DAK: *Is that also true, do you think, of other publishers? It's more difficult now for new artists in France to get started?*

ANTHEA: I don't really know. I would think it's probably more difficult than it was six or seven years ago. Now you've got to be good from the start, not sort of grow up.

DAK: *A lot of American comics are produced so rapidly, one every month, and here the rate of production —*

ANTHEA: One every eighteen months, or two years.

DAK: *And a book here is 44 pages, that's twice the length of a monthly American comic, so the artists there have to produce a lot of material quickly comparatively, so the new people tend to learn while they work. That sometimes makes American comics not look so good to people over here, being compared with books people spend two years on to get perfect.*

ANTHEA: But I think if you look at **Giraud** — I mean I don't know how long he took to do a **BLUEBERRY** album when he first started — but you can see an *enormous* difference in the artwork from his more recent stuff. There's perfection in it now, and he was very good when he started, but the difference between the first album and the last album is enormous.

DAK: *When I first saw that material a few years ago, because he had it under the two different names I thought it was two different artists, the styles looked very dissimilar.*

FRÉMOND.

ANTHEA: Yeah. He's changed faces, I think because he's always wanted it done on film. He's looked like **Charles Bronson** and he's looked like **Jean-Paul Belmondo,** he's looked like different film actors throughout his career. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Just in case.*

ANTHEA: I suppose so. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Do you make any markings on the cover to indicate if the book is for children or for adults?*

ANTHEA: No. In Scandinavia they indicate if it's adult material. We don't because in a normal book, literature, you're not necessarily going to put on it whether it's for children or whether it's for adults, they're going to *know.* Comics here have reached that stage where they know that *this* is not really for children, *this* is for children or adults or anybody you want. It's become part of the culture, you don't have to indicate what is what.

DAK: *In the States, I don't know if you're aware, there's been a controversy about marking and so on. Many adults — like grandparents who would buy comics for their grandchildren — still think of comics as always for kids, so when they go*

"I know more about foreign mar-

into a comic shop and buy an adult comic thinking they'll buy this for a child, when they look at it they're very shocked and upset.

ANTHEA: Yes

DAK: *They have fixed in their minds that comics are for kids. That has caused a great deal of concern with distributors and retailers and publishers over labelling the books. The creators have taken a very strong stand against labelling, several of the top artists have said they will not work for a company that labels.*

ANTHEA: Yes, we've had this problem in Scandinavia because if it's for adults you really have got to put "for adults" on it. Germany also has this same problem — a lot of our stuff gets put on the index in Germany, it cannot be sold openly, it can only be sold under the counter, and it can't be advertised.

DAK: *So how do you sell something that no one knows exists and it's under the counter?*

ANTHEA: People will know it exists because it will be in all the fan magazines, it will be indicated as being on the index, so people will have to go and ask for it — I think this is how it works. It's almost a promotion for it in a way, in certain circles. There was a very strange situation in Sweden, one of my clients was just starting up a new magazine and it was his first issue and he put on the cover a **Bilal** illustration, a woman who was naked to the waist with a snake, and this was banned! His first issue could only be sold from under the counter, which was absolutely catastrophic, so he made a big *fuss* about it being banned and it got through. And this is in a country like Sweden?

JULIA: *Yes, Scandanavia is supposed to be the most sexually liberated area.*

DAK: *We've seen a big variance in the different countries. In Italy we saw unbelievably explicit sexual comics that would have great difficulty finding distribution in the United States. They were not wrapped or marked, they were just right on the newsstands along with everything else, right with the little kids comics.*

ANTHEA: You would probably find that here to a certain extent, not mixed up with the children's books but not terribly far away from them in a comics section of a bookstore.

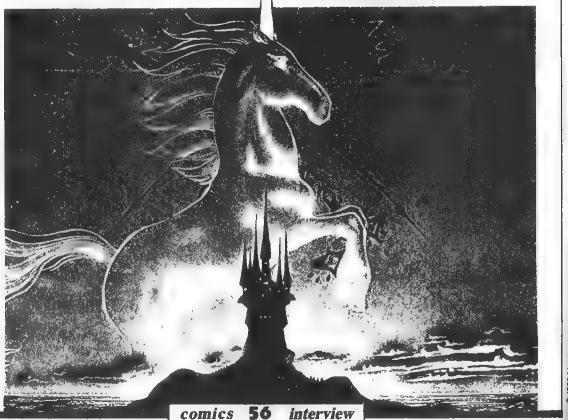
DAK: *It's very different. I think the United States has this image in the rest of the world as being this kind of frontier place, but it's very closed to a lot of things. There's a court case against a comics specialty retailer because he was selling adult material, but not because he was selling it to children. A police officer went into the store, picked up material that was already labelled "adults only," bought this material, and then pressed charges that they were selling adult material; which makes you wonder because it was marked and an adult bought it, but the act of selling the material to an adult was offensive. That's the sort of climate there still.*

ANTHEA: The situation here has changed in the last ten years. Do you know **Lauzier**, he does social satire. There was one book that ten years ago we had to refuse to publish which today would absolutely not be a problem.

DAK: *Is there anything that you can't publish?*

ANTHEA: Well, I should imagine that *absolute* pornography could be a problem

Giraud and Bati collaborate on the second part of LE CRISTAL MAJEUR.



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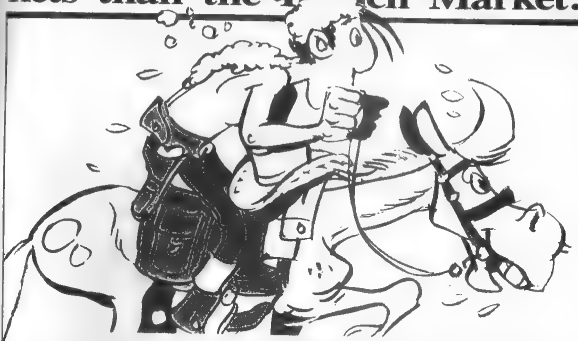
kets than the [illegible]ch Market."



LUCKY LUKE . . . whose smoking habit bit the dust.

— you could probably publish it but I'm not sure if you could actually sell it very openly. I know that the Minister of the Interior here has been trying to get some kind of censorship through, but there's a lot of opposition to it. I think that we wouldn't publish absolutely *anything*, we do have an image to maintain, which is why ten years ago we felt we couldn't publish this particular **Lauzier** book. Our image has changed gradually, I think for an Anglo-Saxon public a lot of the stuff we publish — I mean I could see English publishers going absolutely *scarlet* — *(Laughter.)*

JULIA: *Is there a lot of opposition to the laws of the Minister of the Interior?*

ANTHEA: Yeah.

JULIA: *Where is the opposition coming from? Is it coming from fans, coming from publishers?*

ANTHEA: No, it's political also. It's coming from the public in certain cases, but also from the government opposition — the government isn't entirely in agreement with it. That's really what it has to be, if everybody in the *government* agrees that it's okay then the law generally gets passed. I get the general impression that it's sort of got a bit stifled, I'm not sure where it is now.

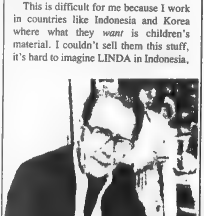
DAK: *That's good to hear. The way we think of France, the billboards with bare breasts and so on — you would not see that in the States — it seems very open. When I heard that there was a movement for such a law I thought, "No, No! Not in France!"* (Laughter.)

ANTHEA: I think it would really be for fairly strong stuff, you probably still would see deodorant ads with girls plunging into the water with no bras on. That's not considered terrible. My sister lives in the States and she's absolutely *amazed* when she sees the ads on television and the stuff that people get away with in the programs. There's one program where they have this girl do a strip tease every week, she does a strip tease in front of the camera, it's humorous — well, it's not very funny actually — *(Laughter.)* But my sister just can't believe this, it's *unthinkable* in the States.

DAK: *Yeah, very. You mentioned that Dargaud's image gradually changed, and I know that that happens to companies. For example, I wrote for DC COMICS in WORLD'S FINEST — so technically I'm the WORLD'S FINEST writer* — (Laughter) — *but there was a sequence in which Superman and Batman went into a bar together after an adventure, and Superman orders milk because he's the all American hero, and Batman orders a shot of hard liquor. DC changed it so that they both ordered milk, which lost the point, because they were concerned with the image of those characters. So three or four years later Frank Miller does DARK KNIGHT in which Batman is a heavy drinker and so on and so on. Their image of themselves changed.*

ANTHEA: We had to change, too. For example Lucky Luke was a very heavy roller of cigarettes — you never actually saw him smoking except he always had a cigarette in his mouth — and he doesn't smoke any longer. Other things have become much more directed towards adults. Also, I don't know what is the result of what, but we were a children's publisher before, doing ASTERIX and LUCKY LUKE and BLUEBERRY — children to teenage and young adult — and I don't know if there's just not any demand for it or nobody seems to want to do it any longer, but there just doesn't seem to be any good quality children's material anymore.

This is difficult for me because I work in countries like Indonesia and Korea where what they *want* is children's material. I couldn't sell them this stuff, it's hard to imagine LINDA in Indonesia,



Lucky Luke's artist MORRIS.

"Here comics are very expensive."

somebody would be beheaded or something. And even the children's material that we publish, like TAAR, they have to dress them up on the cover, put a skirt on the girl. In France these are children's stories and have no problem at all, but in a lot of countries in the world they're *much* too much.

DAK: *Julia worked in the Middle East, in the Arab countries, for seven years, and everything gets censored including baby pictures.*

JULIA: *Yes, little Johnson & Johnson baby powder ads with babies bums would be completely blacked out. One thing I saw that amused me very much was a big black square on Michelangelo's David. It's not considered art, it's considered pornography.*

ANTHEA: Well, Indonesia does not go quite as far as that, it's Muslim but it's not a very strong Muslim country, but they do apparently have a building somewhere where people go through blacking out bits. One title that we have that's about unidentified flying objects with completely *sexless* little Martian people, but they're showing just above the breast and *all* of this is blacked out — the area where the arm joins the body.

JULIA: *In the Arab countries it's actually done at the airports, they rip the boxes open and take everything out.*

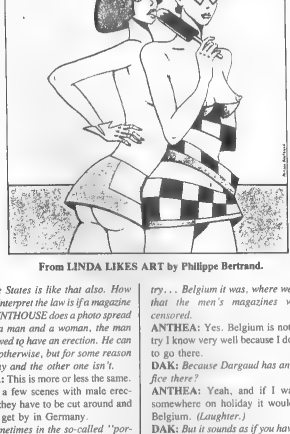
ANTHEA: Well, this is printed in the country. But even in Norway, which is an extremely perceptive country, I sold one series which if you look into it, it's very nasty and pornographic, it's quite funny — anyway, one of my clients in Norway sold it to a fairly adventurous magazine and apparently when they put the first episode in and the magazine went out onto the market they had to take *every* issue back and tear out the center pages because there was such a terrific fuss about this thing.

DAK: *And this is which title?*

ANTHEA: LINDA LIKES ART.

DAK: *They do that in Canada also, and sometimes it's political. HUSTLER MAGAZINE has a feature called "Asshole of the Month" where they put someone's portrait in the center of a drawing of a behind, so they picked Prime Minister Trudeau once and Canadian Customs went and tore out that page from every single issue before they would allow the Canadians to see it.*

ANTHEA: But for example, like in Germany, you can get anything through — well, not anything, *lots* of things — torture, cruelty, despicable violence, but if it's any bit of a man showing it has to be blacked out.



From LINDA LIKES ART by Philippe Bertrand.

DAK: *The States is like that also. How the courts interpret the law is if a magazine such as PENTHOUSE does a photo spread featuring a man and a woman, the man is not allowed to have an erection. He can be shown otherwise, but for some reason one is okay and the other one isn't.*

ANTHEA: This is more or less the same. There are a few scenes with male erections and they have to be cut around and redone to get by in Germany.

DAK: *Sometimes in the so-called "pornography" cases in the States they will sue the retailer who's selling the material, but other times they will include the publisher and the creator and so on. Does that problem ever come up?*

ANTHEA: I've never *heard* of a problem like that here, I can't think of any cartoon publisher being sued for pornography. Maybe there have been but I haven't heard about them.

DAK: *There seems to be a distinction, at least in Italy, between illustrations and photographs. We were told by publishers there that in drawings anything goes but they would consider certain photographs of explicit sex to be pornography, and that's controlled. But they regarded comics as an art and therefore they could do things they couldn't do in photos.*

ANTHEA: I don't know if that exists here, I don't know much about it. Of course in Italy the photo things are quite popular, the photo-stories, which is not really the case here. I don't know how pornographic these photo things get in Italy.

DAK: *I have not seen any quite as strong as the comics get. There was one country... Belgium it was, where we noticed that the men's magazines were all censored.*

ANTHEA: Yes. Belgium is not a country I know very well because I don't have to go there.

DAK: *Because Dargaud has another office there?*

ANTHEA: Yeah, and if I was to go somewhere on holiday it would not be Belgium. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *But it sounds as if you have a good presence in foreign countries with your material.*

ANTHEA: Yes

DAK: *Even despite the handicaps you face some places.*

ANTHEA: Well, I mean they are handicaps but you have to get over them. You sometimes have to *accept* that maybe you are going to have to have a page modified or maybe even cut out if it can be.

DAK: *That brings up something very interesting because Dargaud does not own the material, you publish as a book publisher would publish, where the creators own the material, so they would then have to be consulted about this.*

ANTHEA: Always, and the more understanding ones do agree.

DAK: *And I guess some just say no, no changes?*

ANTHEA: I think if you explain the reasons to them, that there are *genuine* reasons and it's not just somebody being a bit difficult, most of them will accept; some of them will even accept to redraw in certain cases. It makes it more interesting to have a few problems like that. *(Laughter.)*

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LAST WORD

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MORE EXTREME THAN LOGICAL

Dear David,

In #63, as usual, **Henry Vogel** has something interesting to say in the "Up Front" section, and he says it very well. However, and I suspect that this will not come as a total surprise at this point, I find myself in less than total agreement with his views. Now, I could make several comments about many aspects of his arguments. (For instance, the analogy drawn between the control of cars and handguns (since both cause numerous deaths) is somewhat less strong than Henry seems to think, since cars have other uses and purposes than causing death and injury (or the threat thereof) whereas handguns provide us with little else but that.) However, what struck my notice in particular this time was his use of carrying things to their "logical extremes." Let's try that, shall we?

For instance, let's substitute "atomic bomb" for "handgun" and see if Henry's words still make any sense.

. . . people [could be] killed with atomic bombs. (Semantic note — I do not use the phrase "by atomic bombs" because an atomic bomb is incapable of killing on its own. Even accidental deaths would involve a person mishandling the bomb.) The people who publicize the dangers of atomic bombs are pushing for strict control of atomic bombs to prevent deaths from occurring — they are trying to legislate safety for themselves.

Hmm, so maybe atomic bombs should be uncontrolled and available to anyone who wants one, eh?

Now, let's take the section where Henry is explaining how gun control laws would not deter criminals and substitute murder for possession of handguns.

This is not a murder control editorial, so I won't point out that criminals who want to commit murder are not particularly likely to be deterred by laws against murder — they're called criminals for a reason, you know.

So, I guess that laws against murder are futile and unjust, eh?

Now, of course, the two analogies that I have just drawn above are somewhat unfair and may not be precise in all cases. That can happen with analogies, as I think is demonstrated even more strongly by Henry's linking of car deaths to handgun deaths.

This sort of problem can also happen with carrying things to logical extremes. The results often end up being more extreme than they are logical. The main reason for this result is that such a process deals only in absolutes and ignores the complexity of reality and the various shading that may exist in practice. Our principles may be (and should be!) clear cut and precise but their application in reality is seldom without difficulty or complexity.

And before you get *too* upset with me Henry, just remember if you didn't have goofballs like me making all these horrible errors, how could you so easily demonstrate to others the correctness of your ways?

Jim Burke
aka T.M. Maple
Box 1272, Station B
Weston, Ontario
M9L 2R9 Canada

You're right, Jim (aka T.M.). I'm not surprised to find you disagreeing with me. But you'd better sit down before you read this reply because I'm going to AGREE with you on a point or two!

You're right, cars do have uses other than "causing death and injury" (one of my personal favorites is driving as fast as possible on a winding mountain road, but that's beside the point). My reply, though, is so what? Knives have other uses besides slicing people open, but they also do a fine job at that. The end result remains the same — someone dies. Is their death any less tragic simply because the object which caused it has other uses? I don't think so.

You did a good job of taking handguns to an extreme — atomic bombs. However, I'll argue that anyone who truly WANTS to have an atomic bomb can build one. It's been proven many times over, as a matter of fact. I don't think they'll catch on as weapons, however, because they won't be very handy in one to one confrontations. ("Hey buddy, give me all your money or I'll blow this section of the city sky high!")

Now, here comes the part where I agree with you! You're quite right, murder laws DO NOT deter those who want to commit murder. Nor do thievery laws deter those who wish to steal. As a matter of fact, NO LAW EVER STOPPED A CRIME FROM BEING COMMITTED. Laws are simply agreements among people. I agree not to kill you and you agree not to kill me. The fact that some government official has taken the trouble to write this agreement down and call it a law has nothing to do with whether I kill you or not. Quite frankly, there is no way to enforce a law which people do not WANT to obey. The prohibition laws are a perfect example of that. As are our present drug laws. Obviously few people agree not to drink alcohol or take drugs. The fact that someone in the government wrote out a law does not change that fact. Look at this objectively for a moment, Jim. Have you ever TRULY thought about killing someone in cold blood? I haven't. The fact that there are laws against murder have in no way deterred me from killing. I have deterred myself. And I submit that most people do the same.

Okay, let's bring it all together and zero it in on gun control laws. If laws don't stop people from committing crimes then we can safely assume that gun control laws will not stop those who want to own a gun from getting one — even if all the handgun making plants in this country were closed down. Now, what would these laws then accomplish?

1. It would turn some otherwise law-abiding citizens into criminals because they would continue to own handguns rather than obey the law.

2. It would make crime safer for criminals. We've established that criminals aren't going to be deterred by laws, so if they wish to use handguns while committing their crimes, they will. The only difference is the criminal will be able to be reasonably certain that his intended victim DOES NOT have a handgun. Thus the criminal will be much safer, not having to worry about the possibility of return fire from his victim.

3. It will make the jobs of the police slightly easier. When they arrive at the scene of the crime, the criminals will be the ones holding the handguns and the victims will be the ones lying on the ground bleeding.

As I said in my editorial, freedom is not safe. Just because you, or anyone else, are not willing to accept the risks associated with freedom does not give you the right to deprive me of my freedom.

Henry Vogel

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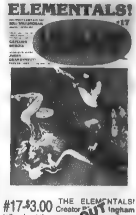

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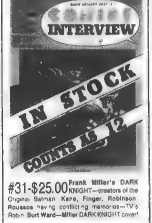

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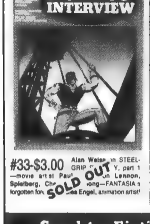

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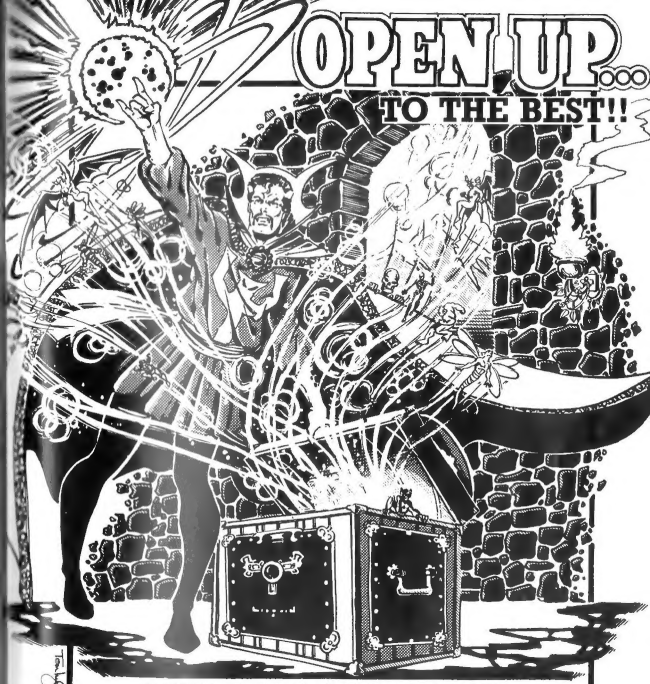

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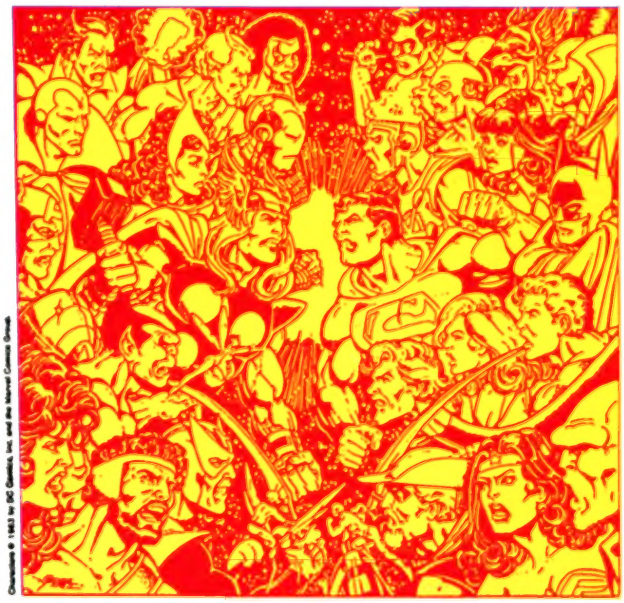

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